TOWARDS HETEROGENEOUS FAITH COMMUNITIES: UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONAL PROCESSES IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation work in substantially its present form has not been submitted or accepted previously for the award of a degree or diploma in this or any other tertiary institution and is not being submitted for a degree or diploma in any other institution or for another degree or diploma in this institution. The research in this dissertation (development of methodologies, field research, interpretation of results, and the preparation of the manuscript) were my own in its entirety. I declare that this information is complete and accurate and that no relevant information has been withheld that I am aware of.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines racial transition toward heterogeneity in three Seventh-day Adventist congregations in South Africa. This dissertation aims to uncover social factors involved in this change as well as to set forth a theological direction with application to the local faith community.

The first section examines recent studies and literature on multiracial congregations, indicating a possible breakdown between theory and practice. Using insights from Kuhn, Gadamer, Habermas, and Geertz, a critical correlational approach is proposed using narrative, community-based praxis, dialectical thinking, and eschatological vision. The theological methods of Groome and Browning are combined to suggest a four-phase approach to practical theological research.

The second section undertakes an ethnographic study of three Seventh-day Adventist congregations on the outskirts of Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. Congregations are examined through the fourfold lens of history, identity, process and program. All three congregations are then compared and analysed from both an etic and emic perspective. Differences between various racial groups are examined and congregational challenges and resources identified. It is shown that while positive racial attitudes exist, underlying black distrust, white fears and other reconciliation issues need to be addressed. Common challenges include continuing racial change, mission and identity issues, evangelism issues, leadership issues and worship issues. Helpful resources in the congregations include an accepting culture, a common language, strong leadership, members with previous multicultural experience and an attractive worship service. Cultural adaptation is analysed through a psychological model ("W-Model") and a congregational model, both of which indicated tensions between assimilationist and integrationist patterns.

The third section critiques the sociological approach through a theological hermeneutic. Hospitality to the stranger is proposed as an alternative narrative for handling transition to diversity, and is compared with existing narratives of difference and unity. The witness of Scripture shows both the need to embrace otherness as well as how central hospitality is to God's mode of interaction with His created order. The implications of this embrace are explored in terms of other theological models of identity and otherness, reconciliation, the *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God.

In the final section a model of showing hospitality to the stranger is examined in terms of the following movements: (a) the invitation or welcome, (b) providing the gift, (c) feasting at the table, (d) sharing stories, (e) providing a room, and (f) becoming part of the household. The goal is to show how to grow in intimacy without destroying identity. Tensions in the practice of hospitality to the stranger are examined: risk is balanced against opportunity, identity against otherness; boundaries are worked out in a context of sacrifice. Nevertheless, in spite of these paradoxical tensions, it is seen that in this narrative there is potential for bringing diverse communities together based on an ethic of self-giving and mutual acceptance.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die transformasieproses van homogene na heterogene gemeentes ten opsigte van ras in drie Sewendedag Adventiste gemeentes in Suid Afrika. Die tesis beoog om sosiale faktore wat die transformasieproses beïnvloed te bespreek sowel as om in die verband teologies rigting te gee aan plaaslike geloofsgemeenskappe.

Die eerste afdeling ondersoek onlangse studies en literatuur in verband met veelrassige gemeentes en toon ‘n moontlike uiteensetting van teorie en praktyk. Deur gebruik te maak van die insig van Kuhn, Gadamer, Habermas, en Geertz word ‘n kritiese korrelatiewe benadering voorgestel wat gebruik maak van narratiewe, gemeenskap gebaseerde praxis, dialektiese denke, en eskatologiese visie. Die teologiese metodes van Groome en Browning word gekombineer ten einde ‘n vier-fase benadering tot praktiese teologiese navorsing voor te stel.

Die tweede afdeling onderneem ‘n etnografiese studie van drie Sewendedag Adventiste gemeentes aan die buitewyke van Durban, Kaapstad en Johannesburg. Gemeentes word bestudeer onder die viervoudige lens van geskiedenis, identiteit, proses en program. Al drie die gemeentes word dan vergelyk en ontleed van beide ‘n lokale en globale (etic en emic) perspektief. Verskille tussen rasse word ondersoek en gemeenskaplike uitdagings en hulpbronne word geïdentifiseer. Hierdie ondersoek toon aan dat alhoewel positiewe rassehoudings bestaan, onderliggende Swart wantroue, Blanke vrese en ander versoeningskwessies aangespreek behoort te word. Algemene uitdagings sluit die hantering van voordurende verandering, missie- en identiteitsproblematiek, evangelisasie problematiek, leierskap problematiek en aanbiddingsproblematiek in. Nuttige benaderings tot die problematiek behels ‘n kultuur van aanvaarding, gemeenskaplike taal, sterk leierskap, lidmate met multikulturele ervaring en besielende eredienste. Kulturele aanpassing word ontleed met behulp van ‘n sielkundige model (“W-Model”) en ‘n gemeentelike model. Beide modelle toon spanning tussen assimilasie- en integrasiepatrone.

Die derde afdeling kritiseer die sosiologiese benadering deur middel van ‘n teologiese hermeneutiek. Gasvryheid teenoor die vreemdeling word voorgestel as ‘n alternatiewe narratief in die plek van bestaande narratiewe van verskil en eenheid om die transisie na diversiteit te verwerk. Die getuienis van die Skrif wys op die noodsaaklikheid om die verskille tussen mense te versoen binne die konteks van God se “gasvryheid” wat sentraal staan in Sy interaksie met Sy skepping. Die implikasies van hierdie versoening word ondersoek in terme van die aanvullende teologiese modelle van identiteit en andersheid, versoening, die *missio Dei* en die koninkryk van God.

In die laaste afdeling word ‘n model van gasvryheid teenoor die vreemdeling ondersoek in terme van die volgende bewegings: (1) uitnodiging of verwelkoming, (b) bereidheid tot opoffering, (c) viering rondom die tafel, (d) deel van verhale, (e) verskaffing van eie ruimtes, f) eenwording van die huishouding. Die doel is om aan te toon hoe om in intimiteit te groei sonder om identiteit prys te gee. Spanning in die praktiese beoefening van gasvryheid teenoor die vreemdeling word ondersoek: risiko moet gebalanseer word met geleentheid, identiteit met verskil en grense word in die konteks van opoffering uitgewerk. Ten spyte van hierdie paradoksale spannings, het die narratief van die vreemdeling en gasvryheid die potensiaal is om diverse gemeenskappe bymekaar te bring deur middel van ‘n etiek van opofferende en gemeenskaplike aanvaarding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: *INTRODUCTION*

Persuasive sociological and theological factors are pushing many homogeneous faith communities toward heterogeneity. Looking back over the last ten years of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church in South Africa, I can see that the movements to and from heterogeneity were all the result of persuasive contextual factors impacting upon the congregation. With each movement, the church resisted and responded, was challenged, transformed and realigned. My own personal involvement with this history has prompted my theological interest and questioning: what causes this movement toward heterogeneity, what impact does this direction have on the congregation, and finally, how can congregations more faithfully respond to the internal and external changes taking place?

Such questions are particularly appropriate within the context of the churches located in the urban areas of South Africa. Prior to conducting this research, I conducted twenty-five interviews with the pastors and key lay leaders in urban congregations in an attempt to understand the dynamics of these congregations. Some of the pastors shared with me the experiences of their congregations, and in each case I sensed that they were also grappling with the issue of relating to this trend toward heterogeneity. Would it last? How would it affect their congregation? What should they do?

The situation in most of the churches is a form of hegemony[1] in which white cultural ethics and norms predominate. More rare, but nevertheless apparent, is a state of tolerance in which the racial balance means that no racial group is powerful enough to establish hegemony over the others (see Chidester 1987:13). Deliberate and permanent integration is probably the least apparent, although a number of the congregations may well end up that way. Whatever the prevalent situation, though, it is clear that these churches are experiencing a feeling of helplessness in the face of social change.

Indeed, the social context of South Africa carries with it unique challenges and opportunities. Whites have to face the fact that they are no longer a majority, and that they are no longer able to influence the power structures in ways that they have in the past. In a number of suburbs, blacks now outnumber whites. All of the public and private schools are becoming racially integrated, though some have maintained their "white culture." In some smaller cities where only one English-speaking church exists, the influx of immigrants from the north has caused an "integrated" church where whites do not have the choice to move to another "white" church. Yet, this limitation of their options holds the promising possibility that they may "stick it out" and try and make a racially integrated congregation work.

[1] This concept is derived from Chidester (1987:13). He uses it in the context of religious pluralism. He calls hegemony "explanations of otherness by which plural religious beliefs, practices and experiences are forcibly re-explained in terms enforced by the singular ideology of a dominant group." I apply this to congregations as being when the dominant ethos of the congregation is determined by one ethnic/racial group.

While the different cultures may work and learn together, most other social interaction tends to be uniracial. Each group tends to be tightly knit together, protecting its ethnic identity. There is a fear of being "swamped" by the majority culture, so each group may travel great distances in order to be with their "own kind." However, changing demographics are making this more and more difficult.

Other political and theological factors have a background influence in pushing congregations toward heterogeneity. Political changes include an emphasis on "affirmative action" and the appointment of black denominational leaders who call for non-exclusive communities. The negative connotations of apartheid impact on any kind of community that looks separatist and exclusive. Theologically, the impact of post-modernism and the loss of foundationalism have led to a paradigm of increasing pluralism (Brueggemann 1993; Tracy & Küng 1991) and the demand for a more authentic expression of the gospel within each cultural setting (Mosala and Tlhagale 1986). Theological response to the apartheid/colonialism/oppression paradigm has also called for reconciliation (Schrieter 1992, Curtiss Paul deYoung 1997; Tutu 1999), the creation of genuine community (Moltmann 1981), and a theology of inclusion (Volf 1996, Law 2000).

This context forms the perspective from which I have undertaken this study. I was anxious to critically understand these forces and their impact on Christian life. It has also been my aim to enable congregations to meet these trends toward heterogeneity in such a way that they remain faithful to the incarnational principle of "God with us."

The purpose of this research, therefore, has been to critically analyse the process of transition between homogeneous and heterogeneous congregations. It is hoped that this study will not only result in enhancing a sociological understanding of this process, but will also encourage theological dialogue about the mission of such congregations in a changing society. For this reason, theological perspectives have been used to challenge sociological realities, thus providing a framework for meaningful transformation.

The means for undertaking this research came from the tools provided by practical theology. Practical theological inquiry, by its very nature, brings together the theological and the sociological sciences in its research undertaking. This study shows how an interdisciplinary approach is possible from within the domains of practical theology.

CHAPTER TWO: *TERMINOLOGY AND AIMS*

In this chapter, the first and major section will concentrate on a conceptualisation of the research methodology and its terms. Secondly, the chapter outlines the operationalisation of this study in terms of its intended aims and methods. The theoretical underpinnings of the study receive major emphasis for several reasons: (a) the interdisciplinary nature of this study, (b) the use of a distinctive qualitative approach, and (c) the combination of various theoretical models from research methodology.

2.1 TERMINOLOGY

Since this study combines both sociological and theological methods, I will draw my definition of concepts from both disciplines**.**

2.1.1 Homogeneous Faith Community

This is defined as a congregation in which one racial or ethnic grouping (see definitions following) has predominant or exclusive ownership of the congregational narrative. A homogeneous faith community, through context or choice, is not open to participation and expression from rival groups. The term "homogeneous" is linked, for the purposes of this study, directly with the concepts of race and ethnicity.[2] Hendriks has produced a useful analysis of the stages at which various South African congregations in transition toward pluralism and diversity find themselves (1995).[3] According to the model Hendriks suggests, a homogeneous congregation would be one in which there is a unifying perspective which integrates the congregation, but does not allow for a variety of faith perspectives or paradigms.

In summary, then, a homogeneous faith community is a congregation which finds itself united by the culture of its majority group and intolerant of other cultural and ethnic perspectives.

[2] Race is used as an obvious referent by which one can establish the nature of homogeneity in the church (see the section under the definition of Transformation Processes in 1.2.3). Homogeneous is preferred to the term used by Venter, "uniracial" (1994:291). This term has been avoided because it suggests that the congregation's membership, leadership, program and social contact are strictly limited to one racial grouping. In contrast, the term homogeneous suggests that one cultural norm is predominant, even if some form of interracial activity may be apparent.

[3] Hendriks looks at five stages in which congregations often find themselves in their growth towards acceptance of pluralism and diversity. His first three stages describe congregations whose outlook is intolerant of diversity and pluralism. In the next two stages, a congregation "matures" to a point where they can tolerate and celebrate varying paradigms within the congregation. He notes that the dramatic shift from stage three to stage four often results in the loss of members (1995:2-5). This shift between stage three and four is the transitional process being studied in this design.

2.1.2 Heterogeneous Faith Community

This is defined as a congregation that shows a significant degree of racial and ethnic diversity.[4] For the purposes of the study, this occurs when a minority racial or ethnic grouping occupies at least 20 percent of the congregation's membership.[5] A truly heterogeneous faith community is one in which all ethnic groups may openly participate and in which the narrative of the congregation allows for diversity and pluralism. This is not to say that "homogeneous units" do not exist within the congregation, but simply that the overall congregation remains integrated despite the existence of different racial, ethnic, cultural and theological perspectives.

2.1.3 Transformation Process

It is an assumption of this study that a primary narrative structure exists in the congregation prior to it undergoing any transformation process. This narrative is affected by contextual changes, such as neighbourhood demographics or new leadership.[6] These contextual changes bring about the beginning of the transformation to a heterogeneous community.[7] As these changes take place, a crisis develops in the old narrative structure; a new narrative begins to emerge and eventually becomes the established narrative of the transformed congregation.[8]

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[4] Diversity denotes the degree to which ethnic and racial differences are evident in the congregation. I have deliberately avoided using the term multicultural to describe such a congregation. The idea that a church can have more than one culture at any time creates theoretical problems (for a discussion of this aspect see Espin 1996:62-63). It is also important to note that I have suggested ethnic as opposed to cultural diversity as being the hallmark of a heterogeneous congregation. The reasons for this will become apparent in the definitions of Transformation Processes and Race and Ethnicity in sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.5.

[5] Gratton (1989:2) suggests that when a congregation has more than 20 percent of its membership from a minority ethnic group, ethnic transition begins to occur more rapidly. It is at this point that control and participation in the congregation begin to be shared amongst the different ethnic groups. This is backed by other research into race and gender relations, which indicates that a group must have at least twenty percent of the larger populations in order to impact significantly on the system or organization (seeYancey 2003:15).

[6] Venter (1994:287-290) suggests a threefold classification of why multiracial congregations form: contextual reasons (demographics); inclusive reasons (pluralistic outlook); and intentional reasons (deliberate focus on being multiracial). Context here is spoken of in terms of the entire environment affecting the congregation as opposed to being limited to neighbourhood demographics alone. It thus involves all three reasons given by Venter.

[7] Emerson and Kim propose eight models for the different origins of multiracial congregation, but of the different churches they studied, it is clear that the majority were formed as a result of changing neighbourhood population dynamics (2003).

[8] This study differs from Venter (see footnote 8) in that it examines only the formation of those heterogeneous communities that have been *formed from a previously homogeneous community*. Thus, the development of multiracial communities that from their beginnings were explicitly formed for that purpose is not considered. It is a contention of this study that change in narrative structures only occurs when the context creates a sufficient crisis in the current narrative (see Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 1970).

Figure 1: Transformation Process

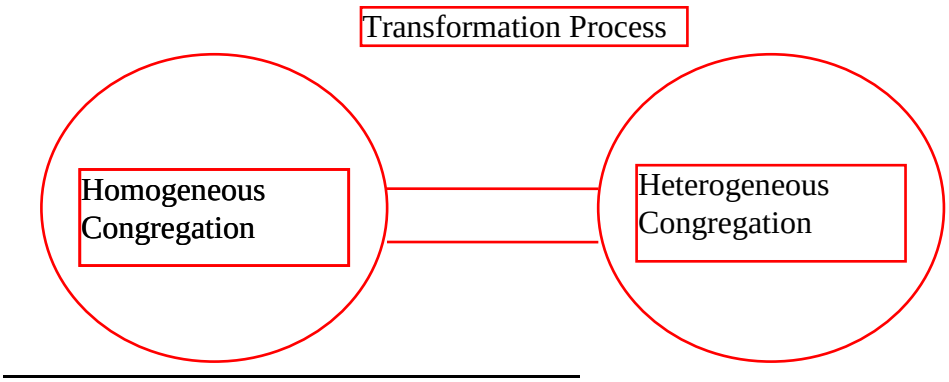
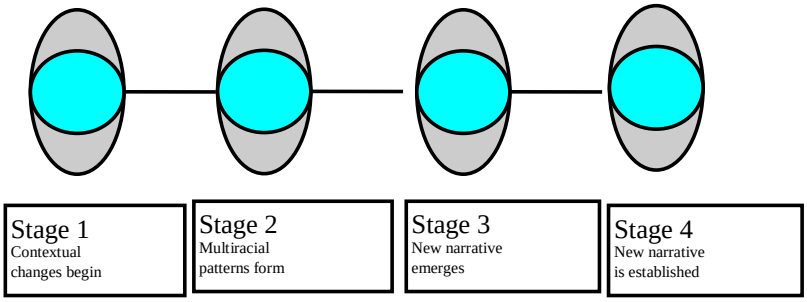


Figure 2: Breakdown of Transformation Process



One of the difficulties with examining a process is that there is usually no definite beginning and ending point. Any homogeneous congregation has heterogeneous elements, and any heterogeneous community has homogeneous factors at work. This is the reason why race and ethnicity have been used as visible indicators of the nature of heterogeneity in the congregation.[9] A congregation will thus begin in stage one with no real racial-ethnic participation and will develop to stage four where such participation becomes possible. These mark the broad beginning and ending points of the transformational process.

It is not the intention of this study to conclude that the three congregations in which congregational studies were conducted will remain heterogeneous. While there were positive indications of this possibility for the immediate future, we also have to recognize with Emerson and Kim that "churches generally tend toward uniracial membership. That is, unless a congregation engages in vigorous efforts—

[9] The use of "culture" is a much more difficult sociological concept, and it would be difficult to define a "monocultural" or "multicultural" community.

cultural, symbolic, organizational, and networking—to remain multiracial, it will eventually become uniracial" (2003:19).[10]

2.1.4 Narrative Structures

Narrative structures refer to the "story" of the congregation as it affects processes and relations in that congregation. Stories or narratives imbue religious expression in the congregation with meaning and are often expressed through myth, rite, and symbol. These stories also help to shape (structure) congregational life and its social constructs. These structures are different from a more static concept of a world-view, such as a paradigm, because they stress a narrative picture of reality influenced by time, plot and context.

Narrative structures are also to be differentiated from culture. This is because they are less a means of expression than they are a story of interaction and relation. Also, narratives tend to be less encompassing and pervasive than culture, expressing a particular story at a particular time and place.

2.1.5 Race and Ethnicity

Race is classified as a cultural grouping that is easily defined by observable characteristics, the most notable of which is colour. Gordon defines race as referring to differential concentrations of "gene frequencies responsible for traits which, so far as we know are confined to physical manifestations such as skin colour or hair form; it has no intrinsic connection with cultural patterns or institutions" (1964:27). Thus, the major racial groupings that will be considered in this study are Whites, Blacks, Asians and Coloureds (those of mixed descent). However, these visual differences are also indicative of further differences of culture, history and language (Venter 1994:6).

This brings us to our definition of ethnicity, which refers to any group "which is defined or set off by race, religion, or national origin [which includes language groupings], or some combination of these categories" (Gordon 1964:27). This is further defined by Schermerhorn, who states that "a necessary accompaniment of these is some consciousness of kind among the members of the group" (1970:12). In summary, Eriksen calls ethnicity "the social organisation of communicated cultural differences" (1993:80).

2.1.6 Racism, Prejudice and Discrimination

[10] This was concluded after two years of extensive study in the United States on multiracial churches. The study included phone interviews, surveys, observational study and personal interviews. See later sections under Review of Literature and Chapters Nine and Ten for further comment.

Racism is defined as negative prejudicial attitudes which lead to discriminatory practices. On the basis of colour and perceptions of culture, overt racism prohibits and undermines participation in congregational life and in the congregational narrative.

The term prejudice refers to a set of ideas and beliefs that negatively prejudge groups or individuals on the basis of real or alleged traits or characteristics. Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) sees prejudice as stemming from ethnocentrism—an ethnic group's preoccupation with itself.

Discrimination, on the other hand, is the *act* of differential treatment by which prejudicial beliefs find active expression.

2.1.7 Culture and Cultural Expression

Culture is used to describe a set of social constructs through which a given community can meaningfully interpret their experiences. It has both descriptive and normative elements. It is extremely difficult to define culture since it is a variable and dynamic process that resists categorisation. However, culture can be expressed and it is this visible element of culture that concerns this research. According to Orlando Espin (1996:62), cultural expression may be defined as "the symbolisation of socially-constructed reality and the meaning(s) it bears in the experience of a people."

2.1.8 Religion and Religious Beliefs

Religion is seen functionally as a socially-constructed reality that gives realistic meaning to a transcendent order of existence (Geertz 1973:87-125). Within the context of this study, religion will be thought of as a combination of belief, ritual and practice that expresses itself through myth, rite, symbol and activity in the life of a faith community.

2.1.9 Congregations

A congregation is "an open system ... an organisation of various elements that are related to one another functionally; both to one another in the accomplishment of the common purpose of its members and to the congregation's environments" (Roozen, McKinney & Carroll 1984:29). A congregation is a faith community having links with an ongoing Christian tradition and thus serving a socialisation function, but also challenging the status quo (Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley & McKinney 1998:8). However, in a much deeper sense, a congregation is a gathering of people who not only share beliefs but also "seek to understand and do God's will in the circumstances of their lives" (C. Ellis Nelson as quoted by Foster 1997:21). The definition of the congregation in this study therefore includes both its sociological and missiological dimensions.

A congregation can therefore be regarded as "a community of faith, similar in meaning to secular perceptions of community as consisting of shared intentions, ideals or goals" (Venter 1994:8). However, a congregation differs from other communities in that it relates to a larger metanarrative of faith that shapes the way its members relate to each other, to God and to their wider environment.[11]

2.1.10 Congregational Analysis

Congregational analysis is being involved in the complex interplay between observation and investigation, congregational dialogue and theological reflection. It is a systematic and disciplined look at congregational life in collaboration with the faith community (Ammerman et al. 1998:9, 10).

2.2 PARAMETERS OF THIS STUDY

2.2.1 Aim

The purpose of this study is to critically understand the sociological process by which homogeneous congregations are transformed into heterogeneous congregations, and to balance this understanding with a theological critique that calls for a more faithful witness to the event of the Word of God. In essence then, three areas of concern actuate the practical development of this study. Stated below are the original goals of this study:

1. To uncover the social factors involved in the transformation process between a homogeneous and heterogeneous faith community in such a way as to understand the narrative structures (stories) guiding this process within specific contexts and congregations.
2. To formulate and analyse theological responses to this transitional process based on the normative traditions of the Christian faith.
3. To allow the faith communities to be involved in this project in such a way that it enables both critical realism of hypotheses as well as constructive theology-in-context leading to a fuller realisation of the event of the Word of God.

2.2.2 Plan of Study

1. This study examined three small to medium-sized (50-250 members) Seventh-day Adventist congregations in South Africa using the qualitative techniques of "thick description." It analysed these congregations within the history and context of their "neighbourhoods," using historical study as well as creating a congregational profile using the social survey method.

[11] This is a functional as opposed to an ontological definition of religion. Some authors hold that the local church is the ontological ('catholic') reality of the larger church. However, I prefer to see the local church as a faithful gathering of those responding to the call of a larger metanarrative. This gathering develops its own social interactions and thus its own narrative.

2. This study considered various theological responses to communities in transition to heterogeneity, and suggested a possible theological ethic for these congregations on the basis of normative Christian traditions and values. This was accomplished mainly through literary study of theological texts, and secondarily through theological dialogue.

3. This study contrasted these descriptive and prescriptive models and analogically formulated an ethically pragmatic direction. A practical theological direction has been suggested to the communities for their evaluation and implementation. This approach involved the use of dialectic analysis and community assessment.

2.2.3 Delimitation of the Study

1. This study does not primarily address the ethical question as to the desirability of a heterogeneous faith community. It does not attempt to *directly* prescribe the necessity of multiracial communities or argue for the importance of their existence. Rather, the aim has been to study the process of change in communities that are already undergoing an unavoidable transition to a heterogeneous environment.

2. This study has been limited to three Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) congregations in South Africa within the historical situation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has primarily concentrated on the cultural, historical, socio-political and religious factors at work in this denominational and geographical environment.

3. This study has been explorative and indicative rather than explanatory. As such, models and concepts that have been used are preliminary attempts at gaining both theological and sociological understandings of the transitional process being studied.

2.2.4 Assumptions

1. It is assumed that heterogeneity will continue to remain a viable and perhaps even unavoidable option for English-speaking SDA churches in South Africa.

2. It is assumed that there is no fundamental irreconcilability between different racial/ethnic groups. Integration between these groups is therefore a social possibility.

3. It is assumed that faith communities are strongly influenced by narrative structures that describe, influence and determine the functioning of those communities.

4. It is assumed that the religio-historical situation of SDA faith communities in South Africa shares a certain amount of commonality so as to enable a degree of comparison and contrast among those communities.

2.2.5 Importance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its theological examination of social factors involved in the transitional process from homogeneous to heterogeneous communities. The context of faith communities in South Africa suggests that pluralism and diversity are receiving increasing emphasis. This study, therefore, attempts to present a realistic analysis of the implications of this trend toward heterogeneity in current praxis, as well as pointing out a theological direction for the future.

CHAPTER THREE: *REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION*

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter will be to outline the theoretical orientation of the study. The primary task is to understand how practical theology as an operational science may be used to guide sociological research in faith communities, especially those that are developing heterogeneously.

Firstly, by doing a review of literature, I will look at various approaches in the study of congregations in transition to heterogeneity. This review will set the framework for the development of my own research methodology. I will then show how my thinking has been influenced by studies in the philosophy of science. It is my purpose to demonstrate how important concepts from these studies are influencing the nature of practical theological inquiry. These concepts also set the tone for my discussion of sociology in which I propose a qualitative methodology for this study. Finally, I return to the concerns of practical theology and examine two theologians who combine many of the concepts that I feel are important to a critical theory of praxis.[12]

3.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study is primarily concerned with a practical theology of cultural transition in local congregations within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa. Literature within this narrow area was non-existent. Therefore, in this review, the scope has been expanded to include three areas: (a) congregational studies relating to multicultural congregations in the United States, where a great abundance of literature can be found; (b) South African congregational studies relating to "multicultural churches," and (c) theological responses to racial change and diversity. This review will be more illustrative than exhaustive, showing the general trends and engaging in constructive criticism of specific works that particularly impact on this study.

This section will not attempt to engage in significant theological or sociological dialogue with the works being reviewed. Such dialogue will form a significant part of later sections of this study. Rather, the attempt here will be to review the trends in recent studies and publications, and to use this as a springboard to discuss the unique methodology and approach of the current study.

[12] *Praxis* is to be differentiated from practice. Practice refers to the activity itself, whereas *praxis* is a reflexive cycle in which practice and critical reflection on practice are part of the same hermeneutical circle. *Praxis*, therefore, deals with questions on the meaning of acts.

3.1.1 The "Multicultural" Congregation in the United States

Some of the earliest studies on heterogeneous faith communities come from the United States, although such studies are relatively few. Venter (1994) suggests that the following major works could be listed: Thurman (1959), Wilson and Davis (1966), Mains (1971), Ziegenhals (1978) and Davis and White (1980).

Most of these early works from the States lacked a strong link between theology and praxis. Both Ziegenhals' *Urban Churches in Transition* and Davis and White's study of *Racial Transition in the Church* deal primarily with the social (as opposed to the theological) dimension of churches undergoing racial transition. While Ziegenhals gives a helpful analysis of the social elements involved in racially changing communities and these social elements' impact on the congregation, Davis and White suggest the sequential stages which a congregation moves through in its transitional process. Both come to the same conclusion: "There is minimal evidence to suggest the possibility of widespread interracial local churches in America in the foreseeable future" (Ziegenhals 1978:102; see also Davis & White 1980:78).

However, the strategies of the two works differ. Ziegenhals suggests the recognition of a heterogeneous congregation as an interim institution which is moving from one racial balance to another (1978:101). He advocates a denominational approach to empower the church to meet the needs of its different members during this change. Davis and White propose that the heterogeneous church adapts as rapidly as possible to needs of the surrounding neighbourhood by adopting strategic policies of community involvement (1980:106-108). Its task is to attract and keep black members who are moving into the community.

Several broad critiques can now be offered. Firstly, heterogeneous congregations are seen as transitional, a stage in the process of the congregation moving to a new racial homogeneity. The concept of a congregation that remains permanently heterogeneous does not receive much discussion. Secondly, while some theological motifs are offered (see Ziegenhals 1978:119-146), these are generally theoretical abstractions, showing no direct links to the praxis of the church. Thus unconscious theological motifs crept into the studies, such as Davis and White's strategy for community involvement which involved the appointment of active civil rights activists as pastors (1980:120; see also Ziegenhals 1978:131-4).[13] These early studies suggest a pragmatic approach to

[13] For a contemporary example of this approach, see Davies and Hennessee (ed.) in *Ending Racism in the Church* (1998). The book presents three case studies and offers suggestions on how to work for "racial justice" within the community. Much of the theological motivation for racial justice is assumed.

heterogeneous congregations at the possible expense of critical theological reflection. This appears to have led to a break in the link between theory and practice.

More recent studies in the United States have aimed to be more theological in character, but still struggle to develop a strong link between theory and practice. For instance, an ethnographic study by Foster and Brelsford in 1993 (published 1996) illustrates the difficulty of connecting theory and practice. They studied three congregations in Atlanta which showed degrees of racial and ethnic diversity. While they did a good job of uncovering social factors at work, their bias toward such congregations leads them to overlook or minimise those factors which work against such congregations. For instance, they mention the loss of a large number of members in these congregations, but pay scant attention to its influence. This raises the question of whether they have developed a critical theory of praxis.

Further, Foster and Brelsford attempt no real theological analysis of their results, leaving us with an ethnographic account that could well have been conducted by any anthropologist.[14] Their practical theological analysis seems to have succumbed to their sociological methodology. In a later book, however, Foster partially corrects this approach by bringing in a theological hermeneutic of "embracing diversity" that provides an eschatological direction for the multicultural congregation (1997).[15]

A similar problem comes to the fore in Nancy Ammerman's study of *Congregations and Communities* (1997). Ammerman and her team studied twenty-three congregations to examine the effects of various kinds of change on congregational identity, programme and process. Most of these changes were linked to contextual changes in their surrounding communities. While the work represents an excellent example of effective congregational analysis, its theological value is overshadowed by the sociological methods which are employed. Sociological analysis overrides theological understanding, and the emphasis finally rests on a systems approach to congregations:

[14] They comment that the congregations they studied are intriguing instances of new ways of being community in contemporary society. This is not so much a theological conclusion as it is a social one. Their conclusions rest almost solely on social analysis as opposed to theological analysis. They show that there are four educational resources that help to develop diverse congregations: (a) an event-centred educational ecology; (b) claiming traditions from the margins; (c) altering the power of dynamics; and (d) communal theologizing. Rather than theological critique, they engage in sociological/anthropological observation and analysis and model formation.

[15] However, even in this book (primarily focused on leadership in multicultural congregations) there is not much dialogue between the theological hermeneutic and the sociological realities of the congregation, since the book focuses on practical exercises in handling diversity within the local congregation.

"In the long view, the question of congregational health may best be answered by looking at the whole population of congregations, assessing how the entire array best fits a changing environment" (1997:321). Ammerman thus suggests that congregations should be evaluated on how well they fit into their environment, which becomes a sociological, and not a theological question. Her methodology forces her out of her theological locker room and onto the sociological playing field. While it is obvious that a theology of inclusiveness undergirds her whole approach to congregational study, this theology is frustrated by a constant dependence on sociological and anthropological techniques.

Recently, a number of significant studies on race and the local congregation have been published. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith published the results of an extensive research study on the history and practice of evangelical responses to race (2000) based on interviews with hundreds of evangelical Christians from different racial backgrounds. During 2000 and 2001 Emerson was also involved with the Multiracial Congregations Project, a large research project sponsored by the Lily Endowment. This has resulted in a number of articles and books by Emerson and others that draw on this extensive research.

For instance, in an article by Emerson and Karen Chai Kim they focus on developing a typology of multiracial congregations by asking *why* congregations became multiracial and *where* they gain their minority populations from (2003). More sociological in nature than typical congregational studies,[16] Emerson and Kim's results are almost exclusively sociological conclusions, with very little theological critique.

However, this is not to say that Emerson and Kim are unaware of the theological component to practical theology. Together with Curtiss Paul de Young, and George Yancey, they co-authored *United by Faith* (2003). Unlike Emerson's research papers, this book is distinctly theological in character, and presents the multicultural congregation as an answer to the problem of race. However, even within this distinctly theological setting, when four congregations are highlighted as contemporary examples of inclusive faith communities, the description is primarily historical and sociological rather than theological. They are described simply to show that "multiracial congregations are an attainable goal" (2003:96). The theological content of the book is largely focussed on providing a biblical and social mandate for multiracial congregations, rather than on

[16] Emerson and Kim conducted a random sample of over 2500 adults, a written survey mailed to congregations and church attendees in sixty metropolitan areas, participant observation and personal interviews with members and clergy of twenty multiracial congregations. Since they aimed at developing a typology, they focused on generalizing their results, instead of describing individual particular instances of multiracial communities (c.f. Foster and Brelsford 1996).

engaging in theology from within the multiracial church. Praxis in the book becomes a description and example of an existing theological motif. It does not seem to arise out of community dialogue and dialectical analysis that result in a renewed congregational vision (although there are hints of this in various sections of the book).

George Yancey, one of the researchers in the Multiracial Congregations Project, has also written a recent book entitled *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (2003). This book outlines seven principles for developing a successful multiracial church. While Yancey does appeal to theology as his basis for motivating the multiracial church to argue for racial reconciliation, a witness to unity and obedience to God (42-50), he admits that his book is primarily practical in nature. When Yancey does appeal to theory, he is often testing sociological hypotheses such as, "Do monoracial churches in the States grow faster than multiracial churches?" (his answer is no), and "Is there more conflict in multiracial churches than monoracial churches?" (only in one area out of eight). Thus Yancey, while providing helpful and insightful principles with regard to growing and maintaining multiracial churches, is not providing a strong link between *theological* theory and practice.

The most recent book to be published on culturally diverse churches comes from David A. Anderson, entitled simply, *Multicultural Ministry* (2004). Written from an African-American perspective, Anderson relates a theology of ministry to different races. Here, the opposite of Yancey's book emerges. While Yancey mainly relates principles drawn from his sociological analysis, Anderson relates principles from his theological and personal analysis. Anderson often "shoots from the hip" in dealing with cultural issues, and he appeals to a variety of Bible texts throughout the book. Once again, Anderson's analysis is often very insightful, but there appears to be little attempt to critically analyse or research his conclusions or his hermeneutics.

Stephen A. Rhodes presents a strong theological work on multicultural churches entitled *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (1998). Rhodes does a good job of dealing with the theological aspects of a multicultural church, referencing a wide range of theologians and biblical narratives. However, when it comes to linking theory and practice, Rhodes often simply demonstrates his theological conclusions with practical examples. Thus, rather than engaging theory in critical dialogue with practice, practice serves to reinforce theory. However, even though this is not always made explicit, it is likely that praxis has helped shaped Rhodes' theological thinking.[17] The challenge is that a clear critical correlational hermeneutic has not been achieved.

[17] Rhoades' book was written after he took a sabbatical and traveled the country researching multicultural congregations.

These examples of literature on heterogeneous churches suggest that while many exciting studies in the United States have been done, they tend to suffer from an overarching problem of the lack of a critical theory of praxis grounded within an appropriate theological hermeneutic. Of course, in addition to these potential methodological problems, there is a difficulty of applying these studies within the context of Southern Africa where the research paradigm shifts from dealing with a majority-minority polarity to dealing with an elite-mass one. Also, the socio-historical background of communities in the United States provides a unique filter through which processes in faith communities are to be viewed. Of necessity this filter had to be adapted for this study in South Africa.

3.1.2 Congregational Studies in South Africa

Of course, within South Africa the question of racially diverse faith communities has always had more of a theological twist due to the pervasive ideology of *apartheid*. Since multiracial communities were the extreme exception during the years of apartheid, attention focussed on the theological response to apartheid, rather than on the social dynamics of the church (see the next section for more detail). Thus, there is comparatively little research done on the impact of race and diversity on the local congregation in South Africa. Three major studies were done before the introduction of the "rainbow era" in South Africa (for further analysis see Venter 1994). Between 1972-5 Lutherans conducted a case study of St.-Peter's-by-the-Lake Lutheran Church, Johannesburg, as part of a world-wide look at the identity-mission relationship. Hope and Young (1981 as mentioned by Venter 1994) have brief descriptions of three Presbyterian congregations, although Venter points out that these mainly focused on their leaders. In 1987 a study was released on a mixed Anglican congregation in Cape Town (St Philip, Wetton) which was used to illustrate a primer on contextual Bible study. No study of heterogeneous congregations has yet been conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Southern Africa.

The studies that were conducted in South Africa up until the 1990s did not do a great deal of critical or theological reflection on the nature of these congregations. Further, the rareness of these congregations raised the question of whether an empirical study was even worth the time and effort involved.

The most important recent study in this area has been the dissertation of Dawid Venter. Venter (1994) examined the formation and functioning of three integrated communities in South Africa and compared these with arch-forms in the New Testament. Venter's dissertation has several advantages over previous studies. Firstly, he gives a comprehensive overview of the history of heterogeneous

congregations in Southern Africa. Secondly, his study links qualitative empirical analysis with a normative Christian text. Finally, he uncovers several social factors involved in the formation of heterogeneous communities. However, Venter's final analysis and integration of his results lacks cohesiveness with his research and suggests the need for better coherence (303-305). His research also limits itself to internal validity, and he admits the need for generalisation of his results (12).

Venter's study represents, in many respects, the ideals and frustrations of this researcher's. He too, aimed to conduct his sociological analysis of congregations within a theological hermeneutic which would provide direction for those congregations. However, in the final analysis, it seems he failed to achieve his goal. His dissertation actually relates two different studies, one textual and one ethnographic, that developed independently of each other. Further, these studies reflect his own biases (a point he admits, 1994:278) in favour of heterogeneous congregations as a norm. Lastly, and true of most of the previous studies mentioned, Venter fails to meaningfully involve the faith communities in his research study, and his final suggestions bear little direct relation to the communities he studied (1994:280-284).

Other recent studies in South Africa deal with the heterogeneous congregation only indirectly. M.A. Botma considers New Testament evidence for how unity and plurality are to be understood (1996). Botma suggests that the unity-diversity phenomenon is to be understood on the basis of Paul's view of the Jesus-Sache (the Jesus-Body). Botma further argues that Paul was willing to tolerate diversity as long as it served church growth. He traces historical concepts of unity and diversity through the New Testament, Calvin, Kung and contemporary Afrikaans denominations. While Botma's dissertation has elements useful to understanding New Testament thought on unity and diversity, it nevertheless does not tackle unity from a congregational level as much as it does from a denominational level. Even at this point, unity tends to be understood from a theoretical as opposed to a practical perspective.

J.C van der Merwe examines a community development project in the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (1999). There is an attempt to make a strong link between theory and practice in order to develop a praxis model that can guide congregation building. However, diversity is a side issue and not the main focus, thus limiting the potential importance of this dissertation for heterogeneous congregations.

J.S. Kruger considers the diversity in South African society from another perspective, examining the importance of service in a post-apartheid society (1999). The study looks at the importance of community (*koinonia*) and service in achieving reconciliation and empowering people of colour who

had been previously disadvantaged by apartheid. Again, while there are elements that apply to the heterogeneous congregation, the study does not strictly deal with cultural change and transition. Insights also tend to be theoretical as opposed to arising from and being critiqued by a practical base.

Thus, a summary of these previous studies from both the United States and South Africa suggests that further study in this area should: (a) aim for a more critical theory of praxis, (b) be solidly based in a theological hermeneutic, and (c) bear direct relation to the faith community from which it arises.

3.1.3 Theological Responses to Race, Culture and Diversity

What has been discussed so far is literature particularly related to congregational studies. In this section the broader aspect of theological responses to diversity, race and cultural issues as they impact on the local congregation will be analysed. Since the amount of material here is voluminous and at times complex, the focus will be on broad classifications, with particular emphasis on those works that deal with heterogeneous congregations. Literature from the perspective of missions will be given as an example of the challenges of researching the relation of Christ to culture in a local faith community.

3.1.3.1 Literature Review: Christianity and Culture From The Perspective of Missions

Within the different domains of theology, varied responses to questions regarding race and culture have been given. Probably the earliest theological material on race was written from a missiological perspective. The main concern of these early works was how Christianity could relate to the "pagan" groups it was trying to evangelize. Responses varied from an affirmation of slavery and separation, to positive affirmations of the basic humanity of different races and the call for limited integration. In the next chapter on history and context, consideration will be given to how these views impacted on theological developments in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa. For now, it is important to note that missiological responses did not generally create a mandate for integrated congregations.[18]

Speaking of the early period of missions, Bosch comments that "the problem was that the advocates of mission were blind to their own ethnocentrism. They confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity" (1993:294). This, in turn, made them less than appreciative of the

[18] This is pointed out by John W. de Gruchy, who illustrates it in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). In 1829 (and subsequently reaffirmed several times), the Synod of the DRC stated that the Holy Communion was to be administered "simultaneously to all members without distinction of colour or origin" based on "the infallible Word of God." However, by 1857 the synod declared that the "heathen" could be served in another building or institution in order to "accommodate the weakness of some" (i.e. whites). De Gruchy then states that this "seems to be an example of social pressure and pragmatism, custom and culture, rather than theology and Scripture, determining the life of the Church" (1979:7-9).

cultures of the people to whom they went. Although there was some difference between those who argued for a social upliftment approach and those who were more focused on introducing others to Christ and salvation, nevertheless, there was an implicit understanding that western civilization was beneficial. As a result, missiology became the handmaiden of colonial pragmatism.

As a result of growing awareness and sensitivity to culture, a shift began to occur in the 1960s in missions. Many factors gave rise to this awareness, including Vatican II, the growing use of social-scientific tools in mission endeavours, and the independence gained in African countries. As a result, by the 1970s, a plethora of books on the subject of the gospel and culture were published. A few works may be cited as examples: Marvin K Mayers' *Christianity Confronts Culture* in 1974, David J. Hesselgrave's handbook in 1978, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, followed by Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture* a year later in 1979. In 1979, the Lausanne Committee also published their proceedings at Willowbank under the title of *Gospel and Culture*.

The interest in culture, and especially in communicating the gospel across cultures, continued to receive emphasis in the 1980s. Kraft published another book, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (1983), followed by Lyman E. Reed with his work, *Preparing Missionaries for Intercultural Communication: A Bicultural Approach* (1985). In addition, anthropology was now added to the menu with the publication of Paul G. Hiebert's *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (1985). Other examples could be given, such as Harvie M. Conn's *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Trialogue* (1984). Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers' *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* was published in 1986, and Joseph Fitzpatrick's *One Church, Many Cultures* in 1987.

This awareness of distinct cultural values obviously led to the next step of contextualization, in which theology was now reoriented around the local culture and its particular understandings of the gospel (see Hesselgrave editor 1989). While this later trend helped to move theological perspectives on culture beyond mere assimilationist models, it still did not call for non-discrimination, reconciliation or integration. If anything, the awareness of social and cultural differences fuelled the concept of different missions (and thus churches) for different races. The questions the missiologists occupied themselves with concerned Christianity's relation to culture rather than a Christianity that transcended cultural differences.

The end result of this kind of theological reflection is particularly seen in the missiology of Donald McGavran and the church growth school. McGavran argues for a *crosscultural* ministry (sending missionaries) as opposed to a multicultural one. His leading dissertation is that churches grow when

they cater for one people group, and thus he advocates a *homogeneous unit principle*.[1] Peter Wagner picks up McGavran's idea and applies it to churches in America. He advocates that the Christian church conform to existing ethnic groupings, since this will lead to the greatest church growth (Wagner 1979).

In the church growth school, there is an implicit rejection of heterogeneous churches. McGavran, while not totally rejecting the possibility of such congregations, states that "requiring converts to join conglomerate congregations will hinder the church from rapidly spreading to *panta ta ethne*" (1990:261). McGavran's support for homogeneous churches is therefore based on his pragmatic approach to church growth.

In more recent mission theology, this extreme dependence on evangelistic pragmatics is balanced with a more mature theology. One early example of this comes from David Bosch. Bosch used a multidisciplinary approach utilising missions, ecclesiology, New Testament studies and political theology to look at the problems of unity and diversity in the church. For instance, reflecting on the New Testament, Bosch comes to the sobering conclusion that "an unbiased reading of Paul cannot but lead one to the conclusion that his entire theology militates against even the possibility of establishing separate Churches for different cultural groups."[19]

However, in addition to the above powerful argument for church unity, Bosch then goes on to deal with the matter of culture. How should cultural differences be accommodated? He argues that it is vitally important for the church to enter into the very fabric of a local community, accepting its cultural and social forms. In order to be churches of the *Word*, the cultural dimension must be considered. "The Church must do everything in its power to minister effectively and in a relevant way to a particular socio-cultural community" (1983:30).

He then tries to balance this off with his previous section on unity. Cultural diversity should not 'militate' against the unity of the Church. Such diversity should even serve unity. Thus diversity belongs to the well-being of the Church, whereas unity is part of its being. He then makes an important distinction. Unity can be confessed, whereas diversity cannot.

[19] Bosch continues that Paul "pleaded unceasingly for the unity of the Church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. God has made the two one, 'a single new humanity,' 'a single body' (Eph 2:14-16) NEB.… Paul could never cease to marvel at this new thing that caught him unawares, something totally unexpected; the Church is one, indivisible, and it transcends all differences. The sociological impossibility (Hoekendijk) is theologically possible. And so the New Testament describes the Church as first-fruit, as new creation, as the one body of Christ the 'one new man.' The early Christians called themselves a 'triton genos,' a 'third race,' next to and transcending the two existing races of Jews and Gentiles, whose enmity was proverbial in the ancient world" (1983:29).

In the final analysis, however, Bosch denies the multicultural congregation as desirable. "It goes without saying that any specific congregation should function primarily within the orbit of one cultural context," he says, but cautions, "as long as we do not define that cultural context too narrowly." A church that closes its doors to worshippers ascribes soteriological significance to cultural distinctiveness, and thus falls captive to an ideology (1983:34). He argues for both cultural distinctiveness and the indestructible unity of the church.

Bosch also discusses this view in his comprehensive work on the history of missions, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*. His intention was not simply to be descriptive, but in looking back to provide the tools for the church to engage in missionary tasks in the future. He argues that in the emerging ecclesiology of our times, "*the church is seen as essentially missionary*" (Bosch 1993:372). He wants to provide foundation blocks for an emerging missionary ecclesiology. This theme has been picked up by the "new" missiologists who argue that the church needs to see its immediate neighbourhood as part of its "mission field" and needs to become "missional" in nature (see *Missional Church*, Guder ed. 1998).

Throughout Bosch's works, one can sense a paradoxical tension between the need to contextualize the gospel so as to reach the world and the need to be true to the *missio Dei*. For instance, the church can be missionary only if its being-in-the-world is, at the same time, a being-different-from-the-world (1991:386). It must therefore constantly be renewed and reformed. In this sense, the church is not to be confused with the kingdom of God, as it is only a seed of that kingdom (377-378). It is primarily an eschatological community, anticipating and participating in the coming reign of God (386).

This brief review of missiological perspectives on race and culture helps us to see the tension present in this particular dimension of practical theology. Theological ideals and practical realities are discussed in terms of "unity and diversity" and "Christ and culture" but the end result is often an uneasy alliance. Like Bosch, this study will show that an eschatological approach to faith communities holds both the key to their transformation as well as the challenges of paradoxical realities. The purpose of this review was to show that the challenges of the heterogeneous congregation are mirrored to some extent in the literature on missions.

3.1.3.2 Overview of Theological Responses to Racism and Oppression

In our overview of mission theology, we saw how literature in that discipline focussed on how Christianity relates to culture. However, this literature review would not be complete if it did not deal with those theologians grappling with the realities of racism and oppression. The answer to these realities is often given in the theological ideal of "reconciliation."

Schreiter gives an example of a "reconciliation-based" theology. He argues not so much for a theology of multiculturalism as for a theology that chooses to deal with issues of justice, oppression and disunity (1992). Talking of their personal struggles to develop multiracial friendship as well as a multiethnic congregation, Washington and Kehrein outline eight principles for racial reconciliation (*Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife*, 1993). Reconciliation is also a key component of Curtiss Paul deYoung's theology (1995, 1997, 2003). DeYoung argues for a "theology of oneness" based on the Apostle Paul's concept of a "new humanity."

Other theologians are more concerned with confronting racism itself. In South Africa, discussions on multiracial theology have always included a strong concern about the prevalence of racism in both the apartheid and post-apartheid society.

In the United States, the church's confrontation with racial issues goes back many decades. There are a plethora of books on this subject, but some of the recent additions are worth noting. Felder, for instance, argues for a new biblical interpretation that eradicates harmful racial understandings. He argues that African contributions have been trivialized by western interpretations of the Bible and calls for a reengagement with the text (*Race, Racism and the Biblical Narrative*, 2002). McKenzie is more direct, calling for an eradication of racism based on the Biblical text and supports his work with insightful scholarship (*All God's Children: A Biblical Critique of Racism*, 1997). Branding points to the insidious nature of racism and its impact on all of humanity and especially the church, concluding with practical suggestions for community and congregational change (*Fulfilling the Dream: Confronting the Challenge of Racism*, 1998).

Emerson and Smith argue that the American society (and this would apply to the South African society as well) is basically "racialized." Thus, while Christians may speak of racial reconciliation, beyond casual interaction with those of other races, many historically privileged whites do little to eradicate societal problems that result in racial inequality (*Divided by Faith* 2000).

How to overcome racism and achieve reconciliation is the theme of Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook's book on multicultural churches (*A House of Prayer for All Peoples* 2002). She argues that races must deal honestly with the challenges of a privileged society through a process of deconstruction, analysis, visioning and reconstruction. She then shows how this process of developing an anti-racism narrative is modelled in several congregational case studies. Thus, while Kujawa-Holbrook deals with multicultural congregations, her focus is on congregations in the midst of an oppressive society: "Ultimately congregations seeking to build multiracial community must confront the challenge of

envisioning a new way of being: a congregation where social power is shared and where one racial group does not dominate the other" (2002:23).

Beyond the critiques of racism and the biblical call for reconciliation is an even more positive theological hermeneutic that is starting to receive increasing attention. It is the hermeneutic of inclusion. Practical but powerful examples of this are Eric Law's works, such as his incisive work, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (2000, see also his other books published in 1993, 2002). Law argues against assimilation models that fail to allow genuine dialogue and therefore genuine community. Based on the ministry of Jesus' inclusive acts he argues that:

> Inclusion is a discipline of extending our boundary to take into consideration another's needs, interests, experience, and perspective, which will lead to clearer understanding of ourselves and others, fuller description of the issue at hand, and possibly a newly negotiated boundary of the community to which we belong (Law 2000:42).

Written from his perspective on the Balkan War crisis, Miroslav Volf makes a powerful and compelling argument for inclusion in his book *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996). Volf combines theological insight, biblical narrative and contemporary trends in an intriguing and convincing demonstration of the need for inclusion.

The argument for inclusion has been backed by recent scholarship on the New Testament communities and the ethnic inclusivity of those communities (Venter 1994 and deYoung et al 2003: 150-156).

3.1.3.3 Paradoxical Realities of a Missional Theology

While there is much promise in the new theologies of non-racism, reconciliation and inclusiveness, we must recognize the practical realities that McGavran and Wagner so forcefully bring out. It is often true that heterogeneous congregations have an inbuilt inhibiting factor which mitigates against church growth in a racialized society. This brings out the dilemmas involved for the church moving toward heterogeneity. Should it seek to keep its homogeneous nature through the use of homogeneous units and thus increase its chances of evangelism and church growth? Or, should it seek to break down racial prejudices through a policy of integration and create a new inclusive community? What would remain true to the gospel? The church would seem to be caught between sociological realities and a gospel imperative.

Thus a fundamental question being asked by theologians revolves around the issue of Christian ethics. In terms of this study, what ethic should provide the framework for congregational change? More

concretely, there is a need to grapple with both the sociological and theological ethics of congregational change.

3.1.4 Relation of Previous Studies and Literature to The Current Study

This study aims to incorporate the insights of previous research while exploring further the specific process of transition between a homogeneous and a heterogeneous congregation. However, this study differs from previous research in that:

a) it looks primarily at the *process* by which the narrative structure of a congregation is transformed as it progresses toward heterogeneity;

b) it makes use of a *methodology* in which an explicit attempt is made to conduct empirical analysis within a theological hermeneutic;

c) it involves the faith-community in the research process and;

d) it is conducted within a relatively defined historical and geographic context.

This study is, therefore, a more narrowly defined one (in geographic and contextual terms) than previous studies in which the goal is to produce a synthesis between sociological insights (praxis-based theory) and theological goals (theory-based praxis).

This study seeks to build on current theological understandings that value reconciliation and inclusion while recognizing the practical sociological realities of cultural diversity and racism. In this study, the concept of the eschatological community will receive particular emphasis as a guide to ethical decisions the emerging heterogeneous community must make.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION: A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

A fundamental question to be answered in any form of research has to do with the nature and goals of the inquiry. This has radical implications for the kind of methodology one uses and the results one expects to obtain. This metaconceptual framework is vital in the development of a critical theory of praxis. Thus, we ask, how do we understand human inquiry and its use in "scientific" and theological research?

My intention will be to discuss (in a very preliminary and summary way) major figures who have influenced my thinking on the nature of human inquiry: Kuhn, Gadamer, Habermas and Geertz. From this discussion I attempt to draw several characteristics of sound inquiry and expand these concepts by dealing with them in the specific context of practical theology. Finally, I draw on two practical

theologians, Groome and Browning, to suggest a research methodological model that incorporates the significant concepts of this discussion.

3.2.1 Thomas Kuhn and The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

The publication of Kuhn's analysis of scientific "progress" in 1962 undoubtedly marked a turning point in our understanding of scientific inquiry. Kuhn argues that scientific understandings are based on paradigms, or ways of looking at the world. Drawing on a descriptive historical understanding of science, Kuhn concludes that it did not follow a linear progression toward greater and greater truth, but rather that science "progressed" by the adoption of successively and distinctly separate ("incommensurable") models and worldviews. Kuhn discusses the ways in which one paradigm succeeds another and suggests that these are more the result of value-choices as opposed to scientific rigour and procedure (1970:199-200). Thus, he appears to attack the very nature of science as an objective, rational inquiry.[20]

Kuhn's inquiry led to the recognition that all scientific practices are, by their very nature, theory-laden. This is not to say that we have to formulate theories before we can engage in practice. Rather, we come to our praxis with questions shaped by the secular and religious practices in which we are implicated.

In this researcher's estimation, the importance of Kuhn is in the way he related practice, theory and rationality. Kuhn dealt with science as a practice that defied neat little propositions. In a sense, Kuhn presented an historical case study of science, showing how the forces of practical reasoning and community "rules," "models" and "concepts" are characteristic of the development of science. In this sense, the rationality of science is redefined as a practical wisdom operating from within a community.

This view holds several possibilities for research methodology. It suggests that the faith communities to be studied hold paradigms which affect the way they interpret their environment. As a community, they develop rules, models and concepts which determine their relation to their context. The researcher's first and most important task, therefore, is to study the nature of this paradigm and its implications for the community. Secondly, a kind of practical reasoning is involved whenever paradigmatic conflict occurs. If a paradigm revolution is to occur, it will be the result of a complex mixture of value choices. An important task here is to help develop alternative paradigms (which help

[20] However, it is fair to add, as Bernstein does, that perhaps Kuhn was arguing for a different kind of rationality in the sciences (1985:23).

to critique the current paradigm) but also to enable better practical reasoning (*phronesis*) with the aim of producing more insightful *praxis.*

3.2.2 Gadamer and Truth and Method

This hermeneutical understanding of science is further developed by Gadamer. Drawing on the concept of *Dasein* in Heidegger, Gadamer suggested the inherent relation of hermeneutics to our very existence or "being." Understanding thus pervades all of our activities and moves us beyond objectivism and relativism (Bernstein 1985:115). Gadamer suggests three important principles that are applicable to the research methodology of this study:

(a) the hermeneutical circle,

(b) the use of prejudices or prejudgements, and

(c) a "fusion of horizons."

Firstly, Gadamer emphatically states, "understanding must be conceived as a part of the process of coming into being of meaning" (1975:146). He draws on Heidegger's concept of a hermeneutical circle in which understanding is the result of experiencing meaning. We focus "on the thing itself," the object of our study, but this focus is itself a result of our understanding of that object. We thus share or participate in the process of understanding.

This implies the role of prejudgements (a term preferred to prejudices). Inquiry involves bringing our prejudgements in a creative way to the object of study. Prejudices, in Gadamer's terms, can be biases of our openness to the world (Bernstein 1985:127). However, these prejudices need not be blind or erroneous—rather they are the creative techniques we use to better understand ourselves and our experience of the object of study.

Finally, Gadamer postulates a concept of horizon as the limits of the possibility of our vision at a particular time and place (1975:269). Outside of these limits exist alien horizons (such as foreign cultures) which we understand only as their horizons fuse with ours. Implicitly, he seems to suggest that the hermeneutical task is "to find the resources in our language and experience to enable us to understand these initially alien phenomena without imposing blind or distortive prejudices on them" (Bernstein 1985:141,142). Thus, one of the tasks of this research methodology is to come to this kind of hermeneutical understanding.

3.2.3 Habermas and Communicative-Acts

Habermas is important for this research methodology in that he suggests that social life is made up of communicative-acts. He presupposes a situation of ideal speech in which participants communicate through the use of validity claims. Communicative action is that type of social interaction which is oriented toward reaching understanding. When the validity claims of understanding break down (as often happens in pluralistic communities), discourse (or dialogue) becomes relevant. Practical discourse thus becomes essential in developing a critical theory of society.

Habermas' aim is to develop a critical theory of the sciences. He suggests that there are three basic modes of inquiry in the sciences (1972:308-311). The first mode involves the empirical-analytic sciences in which the goal is a technical cognitive interest. The second involves the historical-hermeneutical sciences in which the goal is a practical one derived from an understanding of meaning. The last involves the sciences of social action in which the aim is a self-reflective critique by acknowledging its dependence on cognitive interest. Each of these sciences enables the development of a critical theory of praxis. (It is worth noting that these three modes of inquiry are roughly paralleled in each of the three methods of research outlined in this study.[21])

However, it is the hermeneutical mode of communicative action which is perhaps most interesting and relevant to this study. This mode suggests that social interaction is of a linguistic nature, and hints at the importance of dialogue as a key to rational and critical activity. Implicit in this view is also the possibility of narrative, in itself a communicative-act, to describe and enhance forms of critical theory.

In a particularly intriguing recent work, *The Inclusion of the Other*.[22] Habermas shows that political theory must deal with the challenge of multiculturalism. In particular, he deals with the rights of a "minority group" over and against the majority group, especially when the majority group's interests have merged with those of the state. Although he is concerned primarily with the democratic laws of a republic in terms of individual and collective community interests, Habermas' theory does have bearing on a study of multicultural communities.

[21] It will become apparent that this research design is not based solely on the theory of communicate-acts developed by Habermas. The need to link the various sciences defined by Habermas is pointed out, so as to enhance the validity of the research study. However, it is worth noting that Habermas provides a useful philosophical position when he states that "the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed" (1972:315). This has links with the narrative view outlined in this study.

[22] A collection of essays by Habermas in the 1980s and 1990s that originally appeared in German under the title *Die Einbeziehung des anderen. Studien zur politischen Theorie* (1996).

Habermas draws a contrast between liberals who argue for an "ethically neutral legal order" in which each person can seek his or her own good, and communitarians who argue that the state should advance specific conceptions of the "good life" (2001:206). Habermas attempts to deal with the difficulties in both approaches by applying his theories of communicative action. For instance, a person achieves their identity only by a process of socialisation (221ff), and therefore the development and concept of self results from communicative interaction with others. We are therefore required to respect and recognize the contexts which result in self-identity among diverse people groups (225).

Habermas thus shows how communicative action affects multicultural communities. There is a constant dialoguing about what each sub-culture believes to be ethical within a broader framework of "constitutional principles" that guide the overall society. The task is to achieve the good of the wider society while leaving room for individual choosing of the good. This means allowing people to both establish their identity (within the subculture) as well as critique that same identity. A culture does not have to be preserved like that of a species, since culture itself undergoes change through communicative action. However, freedom needs to be given to those working out their identities from within a particular social context.

This brief overview of Habermas' thought on multiculturalism shows the importance of communicative action as part of the development of culture and self identity.

3.2.4 Clifford Geertz and The Interpretation of Cultures

The use of anthropological techniques is derived from interest in Clifford Geertz. Geertz suggests that scientific inquiry into communities is best described by a process called "thick description." He tries to avoid the two pitfalls of anthropology, the temptation to project our own alien categories into a society, and the opposing temptation to try and become as "native" as possible. Geertz argues that we should aim to simply inscribe, as adequately as possible, the basic processes and interrelations in society. According to Geertz, this kind of analysis involves "sorting out the structures of signification…and determining their social ground and import" (1973:9). He further explains thick description as "the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers...to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them" (1973:16,24). The way in which thick description is undertaken is through studying the meaning-laden (symbolic) events in which the participants engage and in understanding these events through the participants' eyes.

Geertz thus shows the possibilities of applying the insights of Kuhn, Gadamer and Habermas to social scientific inquiry. The focus in this kind of a study is hermeneutical in nature, with a dialectical element which leads to greater understanding of the other, and therefore of ourselves. Geertz calls this "a continual dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously" (1973:239).

Geertz also paves the way for a symbolic understanding of religion.[23] Religion is studied as a cultural phenomenon explaining itself through symbolic reference to the transcendent. The focus is on understanding how religion practically functions in the lives of people it affects.

3.2.5 Summary of Insights

We can now bring together some of the most important insights of these various philosophies of science. These insights will form the base of the following discussion regarding the most important elements of a research methodology for studying faith communities.

The first insight brought out is that all human activity, and especially scientific inquiry, is basically *hermeneutical* in nature. There is, therefore, an integrated unity between theory and practice. Practical thinking arises from a critical hermeneutical understanding of practice. Hermeneutical nature is particularly expressed in *cultural-linguistic* expressions. Thus human beings engage continuously in communicative action.

Secondly, practices are often defined and interpreted from within a *community*. This community develops the context for communicative acts and their validity claims. It has paradigms that influence and shape its practices. Its beliefs have symbolic value for the "religion" of that community.

Thirdly, the importance of *dialectical thinking* as part of a hermeneutical circle has been realised. In order for understanding to be a meaningful and rational activity, a dialectical process comparing the whole with the part, the near with the distant, has to take place. Further, dialectical thinking extends to a whole nature of relationships: church and society, past and present, present and future, etc. These paradoxical elements provide ground for rich hermeneutical discoveries precisely because of the tension that exists between them.

[23] Geertz's complete definition is, "A *religion* is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (1973:90).

Finally, another insight is the need to maintain a critical social theory in the face of post-modern challenges to objectivity and foundationalism. The concern is to further *practical rationality* as it relates to human and scientific inquiry. This kind of rationality would seem to operate best (a) in the interplay of creative ideas in creating understanding,[24] and (b) in practical discourse on the meaning of norms and values in a given group or community.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING INQUIRY WITHIN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

In this section we will look at how the insights from a philosophy of hermeneutical inquiry relate to the task of doing research within practical theology. In practical theology we face two opposing dangers: the danger of merely subscribing to a theory which has no basis in church praxis (which amounts to dogmatism), and the danger of ignoring the importance of theory for the sake of practical concerns (quite simply, pragmatism). What is needed is a critical theory of practice, one which understands the status quo and yet one which is able to transcend it.

3.3.1 Theology as Narrative

In *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984), George Lindbeck distinguishes between two types of approaches to theology: a *cultural-linguistic* and *apologetic* approach. The cultural-linguistic approach believes that our perceptions of experiences are formed by our language structures and not by raw experiences themselves (1984:39). Within this realm, valid and propositional truth comes from the inner coherence of the language structure, and this is what "makes meaningful statements possible" about what is considered "most important" (1984:48).

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach enhances the confessionalism found in Karl Barth. It is partly inspired by H. Richard Niebuhr, who emphasised in his work that all theology has a metaphorical base (Niebuhr 1963:149-60). Kliever picks up Niebuhr's thought and suggests that narrative is the very essence of the religious language game. He states, "Isolated religious symbols, theological statements and ethical directives are not typical of the living language of faith which is narrative in form. Myth and parable, personal biography and communal history are the primary forms of religious speech" (1977:185).

Narrative and linguistic forms have received particularly powerful articulation in the contemporary theologies of Stanley Hauerwas (1981), Johann Baptist Metz (1980), and Craig Dykstra (1981). These positions emphasise the way the linguistic structures of Christian stories and narratives shape the character and lives of Christian communities and individuals. They also emphasise how this

[24] The emphasis should really be on the word *play* in the sense which Gadamer uses the term by which prejudgements are used as building blocks to understanding and examining the "thing itself."

happens without the help of either external philosophical categories or religious experiences independent of these narratives.

Within the congregation, the function of narrative was popularised by James Hopewell, who stated that "most parish idiom conveys and implies narrative" (1987:46). Hopewell argued that there is a fundamental link between congregational life and its story or narrative (1987:47ff). The congregation therefore expresses and understands itself through narrative forms and structures.

Viewing the congregation as a character with a story, plot and setting enables one to paint brushstrokes of a congregation that describe the congregation in relation to itself, its past, its future and its surrounding community. Narrative thus provides a useful tool in analysing and understanding congregational life.

3.3.2 Theology as Praxis and Dialectical Analysis

Theology, to be meaningful, must have both a practical and theoretical basis to draw from. Otherwise, it turns into either justification or speculation. For this reason, we refer to theology as praxis. Karl Barth, whose voluminous Christocentric theology might seem abstract, stated that his focus on Christ as the centre of existence could be understood only as a "theory which has its origin and goal in praxis" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 4:3 1955-1961:79). The attempt to divide the "theoretical" from the "practical" he called a "primal lie" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1:2 1955-1961:787).

Theology must therefore be defined as praxis, but what is praxis? Praxis is to be distinguished from "practice" in that it involves more than merely doing, but also reflection and analysis of that which is done.[25] Therefore, praxis implies critical reflection upon practice. In the theological sphere, critical thinking arises out of the church's practice. "Doing theology" should be spoken about more than simply "studying theology" (de Gruchy 1984:2-4). "What theology as a science is about is the attempt to give that [Christian] faith some coherence in relation to the critical questions [from both theory and practice] that are raised about it" (ibid. p.6).

The practice of theology is therefore "theory-laden" because "all our practices, even our religious practices, have theories behind and within them" (Browning 1991:6). Swinton states that praxis is theory-laden "because it includes theory as a vital constituent. It is not just reflective action, but

[25] John Swinton comments that "praxis is reflective because it is action that not only seeks to achieve particular ends but also reflects on the means and the ends of such action in order to assess the validity of both in the light of its guiding vision" (2000:14). The aspect of vision will be further explored later in this section.

reflective action that is laden with belief" (2000:15). Ultimately, theology is a reflective but faithful response to the coming of God.

It is important to note that neither faith nor action can be divided in the theological task.[26] As Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated in *The Cost of Discipleship*, "only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes" (1995:63). The challenge in a cross-cultural situation is that we realize that "obedience is part of our hermeneutics" (Dyrness 1992:156). Thus, we must connect faith and action while realizing that our actions are somewhat dependent on our interpretation of faith.

In this respect, some theologians have contended that the criterion of authenticity for a Christian community is not orthodoxy but *orthopraxis* (authentic transformatory action).[27] However, by this they mean more than analysing theology by Christian *practice*, for then it would be easy for theology to degenerate into a form of pragmatic sociological analysis. For this reason, we must see praxis as including a *telos* which looks to the final purpose of the action. Here again, however, the telos itself is only discovered through action.

> Praxis is an action that includes the *telos*, or final meaning and character of truth. It is an action in which the truth is discovered through action, not merely applied or "practiced." In praxis, one is not only guided in one's actions by the intention of realizing the *telos*, or purpose, but by discovering and grasping this *telos* through the action itself (Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 2001:49).[28]

How can practical theology prevent itself from drifting into theological musings or sociological pragmatics? As we have suggested throughout this chapter, this can only be accomplished if a strong link is maintained between theory and practice. Thus, theology as praxis assumes that theory must be part of theological reflection. In particular, theology nurtures critical thinking of both tradition and vision, thus broadening the horizons of current praxis (see later section on Groome).

This discussion of theology as praxis has an important bearing on this study, for reflection concerning the actions of communities in transition can neither simply prescribe nor describe. In describing these communities, one sees human-enacted theology—a local (many times pragmatic) praxis in a changing society. However, one also senses a God-event, that is, a faith community relating to and in critical

[26] In this respect, Swinton comments that "belief is embedded within the act itself. The act is found to be expressive of particular beliefs and as such is an appropriate subject for critical theological inquiry" (2000:11).
[27] See the discussion in Swinton (2000:11), who quotes Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York, Mowbray 1996:7).
[28] In terms of the church, Ray Anderson goes on to define ecclesial praxis as a "dynamic process of human critical reflection carried out" (2001:51). He states that, "in praxis, God's truth is revealed through the structures of reality by which God's actions and presence are disclosed to us through our own actions. It is not human actions that constitute the praxis of God. Rather, God acts through our human actions to reveal the truth" (ibid.).

dialogue with the kingdom of God (in its historical, current and anticipatory forms). The task of the theologian is to enhance this critical correlational dialogue between faith and action.

N. Sreinacher gives us an example of this kind of dialectical approach. He sees practical theology as "the critical theory of church praxis in society" (quoted by Symington 1989:102). He maintains a normative Christian tradition by emphasising that practical theology mediates between current praxis and the "cause of Jesus" (normative ideals of the Christian faith). However, theory (what the church should be) and praxis (what the church is) are always in tension, and it is this tension that gives practical theology its ability to creatively transform the status quo.

An important component in a dialectical approach is the need for hermeneutical understanding. To understand social activities, we begin with hunches and insights, which we then critically examine against social praxis. This often leads to further insights, and thus to greater understanding.

3.3.3 Theology as Community

Practical theology has also seen the reorientation of theology around the congregation (Hough and Wheeler 1988). This approach has achieved tremendous popularity in recent years, especially in the United States. In their book, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry,* D.E. Miller and J.N. Poling define practical theology as "reflection arising out of the living communities of faith and resulting in faith-informed interpretations that serve to guide the ongoing life and actions of those communities" (1985:11). According to these authors, all theology is practical when it is based in and reflects upon a living community of faith. Thus theology, as part of the life of the community, reflects upon its "story" both in the sense of what God is doing among them and in what God is calling them to become. This dialectical process would include a correlation of the Christian story with other (societal) perspectives. The *telos* of such a theology is the formation of persons and communities that more authentically respond to the kingdom of God.

This emphasis on community has impacted on this study considerably. The *focus* of the study therefore became particular faith communities. The *function* was to understand the theory-laden praxis of these communities and develop a critical stance towards them. Finally, the *telos* of this study has been to enhance the performance of Christian acts[29] within these same communities.

[29] By community is meant a faith community in the tradition of the Christian faith. By praxis is meant the communicative-acts by which the community lives out its narrative. The *telos* of this study is therefore an enhancement of critical-faith based on the "event of the Word of God" (Jungel) or the "praxis of God" (Grieve).

3.3.4 Theology as Ethics

This raises the subject of theology as ethics, for at the heart of the dilemma of ecclesial praxis is the burning question of "What then shall we do?" If theology as praxis is to include a *telos* in its reflective action, then how is that *telos* to be defined? In the face of post-modern relativism, what should guide the church's ethical response in a changing society? How does the church ensure that its vision is not misguided or even morally repugnant?[30]

Ethics cannot be determined either fully outside the human situation or fully in it. The first leads to moral absolutism and ultimate tyranny, and the second leads to moral relativism and ultimate chaos.[31] Although there are many definitions of ethics, most ethicists would see ethics as decisions and actions leading to the well-being of the individual and society. As Christians, we believe that ethics entails this and more. Ethics grapples with our values, decisions, motives and actions in the light of God's intention for humanity. Christian ethnics not only deals with what seems the best for us, but what God intends us to be.

Theologians can engage in critical ethical dialogue because of the self-revelation of God. God's continual coming breaks down existing motifs and societal self-justifications and replaces them with kingdom-inspired praxis. At any moment, God is fully present in the human situation, bringing it under judgement within a hermeneutic of hope. Therefore, human ethics can never be absolute (taking the place of God) or relative (our culture replaces His kingdom), both of which are forms of idolatry. Instead, the theological ethical task is one in which we remain open to the God who "is and was and is to come."

3.3.5 Theology as Mission and the Reign of God

God's coming provides a hermeneutical criterion for the church's understanding of both itself and Scripture. This implies that the meaning of Scripture does not simply lie in the events of the past. The task of the theologian is not simply to uncover God's past actions. Rather, God's coming is present in the midst of the society reading those Scriptures and as the resurrected Lord, He is the contemporary expositor of those same Scriptures.[32] Furthermore, since God is yet to come, any

[30] A practical example of how theological ethics can be misguided occurred during the apartheid era, when a number of churches actively promoted a theology of oppression by arguing that "Ham's curse" applied to black Africans. The result of this kind of theology was moral justification for a discriminatory and racialised society.

[31] This is not to say that there are no moral absolutes, but simply that morality is also praxis—that is, we act out what we believe to be right and our morality is shaped by what we act out. There is no way out of this cycle—it is impossible for humans to independently determine morality because we are shaped by who we are and by what we do.

[32] See Anderson (2001:79) where he argues in favor of Christopraxis, in which God's act in Christ helps us understand "how the authority and presence of truth can be located in the creative tension between the Word of God written as inspired and the Word of God living as inspiring. This act of God in Christ may now be understood as the present working of the risen Lord in the church by the Holy Spirit" (ibid.).

understandings of the church and Scripture must be held under both grace and judgement. As we progress toward the eschaton of the ages, we must sense the frailty and fallibility of current hermeneutical understandings. The openness of the future that God is creating produces the open church (Moltmann 1978).

This means that theology is fundamentally about God's activity, although it incorporates our human response. The church's role in the world is therefore not *ecclesiocentric,* but *theocentric*. The church is essentially "missional," and its task is determined by the *Missio Dei* (Guder 1998:81-83; Bosch 1991:389-393). Our praxis, therefore, is influenced and directed by God's praxis.

> Practical theology is an ongoing pursuit of competence through critical theological reflection. This competence does not arise merely through repetition and practice of methods but is gained through participation in the work of God in such a way that accountability for the judgements made in ministry situations are congruent with Christ's own purpose as he stands within the situation and acts through and with us" (Anderson 2001:53).

The church thereby becomes an instrument for God's own mission (Moltmann 1978:64). It stands not for itself, but in the light of God's coming.

A number of theologians have seen the church's task as related to the "reign of God" and the "kingdom of God." It is God's kingdom and not the church that ultimately has precedence. Herman Ridderbos comments on this aspect in *The Coming of the Kingdom*:

> "*The basileia* [reign or kingdom] *is the great divine work of salvation in its fulfilment and consummation in Christ; the ekklesia* [church] *is the people elected and called by God and sharing in the bliss of the basileia*. Logically, the *basileia* ranks first, and not the *ekklesia*…. [The *basileia*] represents the all-embracing perspective, it denotes the consummation of all history, brings both grace and judgement, has cosmic dimensions, fills time and eternity. The *ekklesia* in all this is the people who in this great drama have been placed on the side of God in Christ by virtue of the divine election and covenant." (ed. Raymond O. Zorn, tr. H. deJoungste [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962:354] as quoted by Guder 1998:98,99.)

Thus, the church will always remain a sign of the kingdom rather than being the kingdom itself (see Leslie Newbigin's *Sign of the Kingdom*, 1980). The church is called to represent the reign of God by being a foretaste of this reign as well as being its servant and messenger (see also Guder 1998:102-109).

3.3.6 Conclusion

So far we have noted a number of concepts for a critical theory of praxis within theology. This included the importance of narrative and narrative structures which take heed to the cultural-linguistic

nature of Christian communities. We also saw the role of dialectical theologies and how an interrelation between theory and practice has an important role to play in human inquiry. We noted several important aspects for this dialectical theology to remain both critical and relevant to those it seeks to impact. We saw the need for theology to be based in faith communities which are the concrete manifestation of church praxis. We also saw the potential, though, for status quo theologies, and the need for a critical theology which is based on God's self-revelation and not simply human ethics. Seeing theology as being mission-based and working from the hermeneutic of the reign of God enables us to see the church in a transformational light and to work and pray for the coming kingdom.

We will return to these themes in our final discussion of research methods when we examine Groome and Browning. For the moment, we turn for a broader perspective to the other discipline involved in our research method—that of sociology (and by implication anthropology).

3.4 OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 The Use of Sociology

This study advocates the use of sociological methods as an approach to researching religious practices within the domain of practical theology. However, the use of sociology for this purpose requires explanation. What kind of sociological theory is sufficient to guide the techniques and methods employed in this study? Why has this approach best suited the research interests in this project? How has the use of an interdisciplinary approach affected the final outcome of a study whose primary research goal is theological?

3.4.2 Principles of Social Science

What are the goals of social science? Babbie outlines several principles of this discipline: (a) logical reasoning,[33] (b) determinism,[34] (c) generalisation, (d) parsimony,[35] (e) specificity, (f) empirical verification,[36] (g) intersubjectivity, and (h) openness to modification (1975:30-42). Babbie's aim is to show how social research can be scientific as opposed to random human inquiry.

[33] A combination of inductive and deductive reasoning through which one moves in a cyclical fashion: forming a hypothesis and then testing this hypothesis against data from reality, moving back to hypothesis, etc.
[34] "Determinism" refers to the logic of causation, whereby there are bound to be causes for any series of social action.
[35] Referring to the attempt to gain the most explanatory power out of the smallest number of variables.
[36] Babbie would seem to be advocating a theory of falsification along the lines of Popper. The aim is to only advocate theories which can be "tested" against reality.

Williamson compares the goals of physical science with those of the social sciences, and states that they have similar goals (objectivity, replication, accuracy, critical thinking, etc.), but that the difference between them is one of degree. This is because the social world is necessarily more complex than the physical world. The central problem in social scientific research is therefore how to relate abstract theory to empirical data (Williamson 1977:8, 12).

However, a critique of both of these views is that they have lost sight of the fundamental reliance of the social sciences on hermeneutics, as well as the need to recognise the impossibility of ever fully "knowing" the social world (see Winch's themes in *The Idea of A Social Science*, 1958). This is not to say that "scientific" and "rational" goals should be abandoned in the social sciences. Rather, we need to recognise the limitations of traditional scientific goals when it comes to studying social phenomena.

This is particularly true in a sociology of religion, which often ignores the hermeneutical approach in order to be faithful to its own scientific dogma. The main problem with using sociological methods in theology is that sociology does not allow for a faith perspective in its methodology. In referring to a sociological perspective of religion, McGuire states that it is "a way of looking at religion that focuses on the human (especially social) aspects of religious belief and practice" (McGuire 1992:7)

The problem with the sociological perspective is that it lacks a key religious quality, "faith" (McGuire 1992:9). Sociologists do not take the believer's meanings for granted, but rather take them as an object of study. McGuire states that "sociology must necessarily 'bracket' (i.e., methodologically set aside) the crucial religious question: To what extent is this action also from God?" (1992:9) In a sense, therefore, a sociological perspective of religion is concerned only with providing an explanation of the human experience and behaviour in religion.

It is this danger of sociology usurping the role of theology in practical theology that has led to the research methodology outlined in this design. Sociological methods will need to be carefully employed so as not to thwart the theological goals of this study. After all, this study is not merely concerned with analysing a social phenomenon called a congregation, but in understanding that congregation in the light of its faithful witness to the event of the Word of God.

3.4.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology

Which sociological method best fits into this hermeneutical approach to inquiry? As mentioned, the framework of sociology has two supports: the assumption that there are (a) observable similarities in human behaviour, and that these are (b) best explained as social processes or structures (Venter

1994:23, 24). However, from this base two methodologies of social study have developed: quantitative and qualitative studies. The adoption of a particular method will depend on both the nature of the social object being studied as well as one's philosophical assumptions.

3.4.3.1 Quantitative Methodology

In quantitative methodology the research data is regarded as consisting of retrievable facts occurring in social structures. The researcher aims to establish the probability of which social causes are responsible for an individual's behaviour. It has a logico-inductive or an inductive philosophical grounding (Feagin e.a. 1991:31). In a typical social survey approach, large numbers of respondents are asked a series of questions. Statistical relations are drawn, and a simple model of causal relations is used to construct a series of social laws. The complexity of the social world is often disregarded. In addition, the units of analysis are normally individuals or individual cases. This process has been described as methodological individualism (Feagin e.a. 1991:38).

3.4.3.2 Qualitative Methodology

In qualitative methodology, the emphasis is on understanding the complexity of the social phenomenon. The meaning of social interactions is important, and the participator's understanding is analysed from within the process (Strauss 1987). What is usually studied is a process involving a smaller population. If the process or population is adequately defined, it can be argued to represent similar groups (Feagin e.a. 1991:14-15). Within congregations, a case study approach is generally adopted, with the aim of gaining an intuitive understanding of the group, organisation or subculture (Ammerman et al. 1998:196ff; Feagin e.a. 1991:13).

3.4.3.2.1 Case Studies

A case study is a detailed multifaceted analysis of a single social phenomenon, using qualitative methods, although comparative and quantitative work can be included (Feagin e.a. 1991:2). It often uses the methods of "thick description." Congregational analysis as a specific kind of case study uses sociological techniques to understand and develop theories about congregational life. These techniques are derived from sociology, a discipline which looks critically at observable human phenomena in order to explain and predict human behaviour and social processes (Williamson 1977:8; Babbie 1975:26-28). In recent years, two popular guides to congregational study have been released, *The Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Carroll, Dudley and McKinney, 1990) and later a major revision of that work, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley and McKinney, 1998). They state that congregational study is the systematic and disciplined study of the congregation so as to uncover hidden structures and processes through an established order of inquiry (1998:11).

3.4.3.2.2 Guiding Principles and Methods

Qualitative research has three guiding principles: induction, holism and subjectivism. It tends to be exploratory (rather than explanatory) in that it induces its principles from the individual case being studied. It is holistic in that it aims to gain as complete a picture of the phenomenon as possible. And it offers a subjective (but not unscientific) interpretation and understanding of the processes at work.

Lofland (1971:11) suggests that qualitative research should be made up of four elements:

1. Intensive immersion
2. Focus on depicting the situation
3. Focus on interactional strategies
4. Assembly and analysis of an abundance of qualitative data of events, strategies, actions, peoples and activities.

He goes on to suggest various analytical units that can be used in a case study (1971:13).

1. acts—temporally brief.
2. activities—longer duration—significant elements in participants lives
3. meanings—verbal production of participants that define and direct action
4. participation—adaptation to the situation or setting of participants
5. relationships
6. settings

The purpose of this rather elaborate inquiring is to gain intimate familiarity. Each of these analytical units helps the researcher to better understand the dynamic and complex social world which he is studying.

3.4.3.2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of a Qualitative Approach

This study advocates a qualitative approach to congregational studies. In this regard, the qualitative approach has a number of advantages over quantitative approaches. Firstly, a qualitative approach is best suited to examining narrative structures by its in-depth examination of congregational interactions and beliefs. Secondly, this approach is particularly useful for examining religious systems, since it aims at hermeneutical understanding as opposed to generalised principles. Thirdly, it has been found that qualitative methods are good for studying social processes over time (Babbie 1975:196). Fourthly, congregations tend to be open systems with complex relations among their

members, and methods of "thick description" are best suited to examining this kind of social phenomenon.

Another advantage is that the methods used are primarily taken from anthropology, a discipline that examines small subsets of culture, and these methods are well-suited to congregational analysis, which is really a study of small communities. Yet another strength comes from the fact that since this study aims to be exploratory in nature, the use of qualitative techniques allows for a constant interaction between the data and analysis (Babbie 1975). Finally, qualitative approaches, such as a case study, are well suited to examining rare and unusual phenomena, such as a racially integrated congregation (Carroll et al. 1990:160).

However, it is recognised that the use of qualitative methods is not without critique. With regard to participant observation, a major complaint levelled against it is that as a methodological procedure it does not allow for adequate generalisation. A single case study can hardly be taken as representative of the whole of wider society (Geertz 1973:20-23). However, perhaps the difference between survey research and case studies is that in surveys one aims at empirical generalisation, whilst in a case study, one would aim at analytical generalisability (Williamson 1977:21). The aim is to produce a comprehensive analysis that might be applicable in a variety of situations. Geertz appropriately speaks of letting the sheep we have studied speak to sheep in other valleys.[37] The story we tell of one congregation, in their struggle to bring about the praxis of God, may well speak to another congregation who become inspired, challenged and redirected as a result of hearing this story.

Another critique of participant observation and case study research is the personal role of the researcher in the research process. The researcher's interaction with the research subject is said to prejudice the research study. While it is true that this kind of research is particularly open to bias from the researcher, bias in research is inevitable.[38] In fact, the very input of the researcher is valuable in understanding the social processes at work. "Researchers are often their own best data source; their personal feelings and behaviours constitute relevant data" (Williamson 1977:25). This does not, however, negate the constant risk that the researcher will observe only those things that support prior theoretical conclusions (Babbie 1975:218).

[37] Geertz states, "The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said" (1973:30).
[38] Refer to the discussion on Gadamer in 2.1.2 in which he indicates the positive aspect of prejudices, as long as these prejudices are not "blind."

Babbie mentions several possibilities to overcome this problem. Firstly, the researcher should augment his personal observations with quantitative analysis. Secondly, he can reinforce his understandings with intersubjective analysis. Finally, he can be sensitive to the problem and seek to continually be aware of his own prejudices (Babbie 1975:219).

In summary, then, while the use of a qualitative methodology brings in its train a number of attendant concerns, these can be successfully overcome through adequate awareness of the subjective nature of the qualitative approach. In addition, it seems that this approach is most open to theological understanding and use, especially in the study of congregations. Understanding the meaning-laden world of a congregation also means that we can still deal with the Christian issue of faith.

3.5 DEVELOPING A RESEARCH MODEL FOR THIS STUDY

Two theologians have significantly influenced the development of this researcher's perspective on practical-theological inquiry: Thomas Groome and Don Browning. Both of these theologians attempt to correlate current Christian practice and knowledge with the Christian tradition and story. Their aim is to enable a critique of current praxis as well as provide a *telos* for future praxis.

3.5.1 Fundamental Practical Theology (Browning)

Don Browning is one of the most significant North American theologians in the debate over the nature of practical theology. His work shows two main concerns: the application of hermeneutics to theological disciplines, and the relation of church praxis to society.

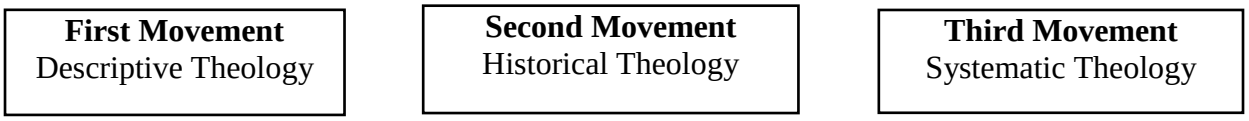
Browning builds on the work of David Tracy, who in turn revises concepts from the work of Paul Tillich. Tillich believed that theology is a correlation of existential questions that emerge from cultural experience and answers from the Christian message (Tillich 1951:36). Tracy envisions theology, therefore, "as a mutually critical dialogue between interpretations of the Christian message and interpretations of contemporary cultural experiences and practices" (1975:46). Christian theology thus becomes a critical dialogue between the implicit questions and explicit answers of contemporary cultural experiences and practices. According to Tracy, the Christian theologian must in principle have this critical conversation with "all other answers," from wherever they come. Tracy explains, "Practical theology is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation" (Tracy 1983:76).

Browning develops Tracy's approach, but criticises him for beginning with a fundamental theology concerned primarily with cognitive and theological verification. He suggests what he calls *A*

Fundamental Practical Theology (1991). This theology comprises three movements, the third of which is basically a synthesis and development of the first two. Using terms from the theological disciplines which are common to us, but employing them in radically new ways, Browning describes a revised critical correlational theology (1991:46) which allows for a critical theory of praxis.

The three movements Browning outlines are descriptive, historical and systematic theology. Each of these is a process in developing a critical and theological understanding of the nature of church practices.

Figure 3: Browning's Movements of Theology



3.5.1.1 Descriptive Theology

Browning describes the aim of descriptive theology as being to describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to practical questions that generate all theological reflection. Browning uses a philosophical concept derived from Gadamer to describe this kind of theology.

> To some extent, this first movement is horizon analysis: it attempts to analyse the horizon of cultural and religious meanings that surround our religious and secular practices. To describe these practices and their surrounding meanings is itself a multidimensional hermeneutic enterprise or dialogue (1991:47).

This movement of theology, according to Browning, begins a process of dialogue between the theoretical world of the researcher and the practical world of the Christian community. The researcher helps the community to better understand the meanings that guide its actions, while the researcher is forced to grapple with new questions arising from the actions of the community. Browning's concern is to show how theology needs to be hermeneutically oriented and thus fundamentally linked with community praxis. He outlines the hermeneutical task as follows:

> The researcher brings his or her pre-understanding into the dialogue with the actions, meanings, and pre-understandings of the subjects. Social-systemic, material, and psychological determinants are traced and explained as well as possible, but they are placed within the larger set of meanings that give them direction in the scheme of human action.... Practical theology describes practices in order to discern the conflicting cultural and religious meanings that guide our action and provoke the questions that animate our practical thinking (1991: 47, 48).

3.5.1.2 Historical Theology

Browning asks this fundamental question: "What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?" (1991:49).

The questions formulated in a description of the faith community's practices are now brought to the normative texts. This kind of theology is called "historical" because it refers to the two normative "texts" of Christian communities: Scripture and tradition. Both of these are historical in nature. However, Browning hints at the dual nature of tradition when he relates its social and theological aspects.

The very nature of historical study brings us back to the hermeneutical dimension in which the interpretive evaluation of the normative "texts" has implications for our practices.

3.5.1.3 Systematic Theology

Seen from the perspective of Gadamer's hermeneutics, this movement is the fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of normative Christian texts.

Browning sums up the nature of this final movement by stating that the systematic character of this movement "comes from its effort to investigate general themes of the gospel that respond to the general questions that characterise situations of the present" (1991:51).

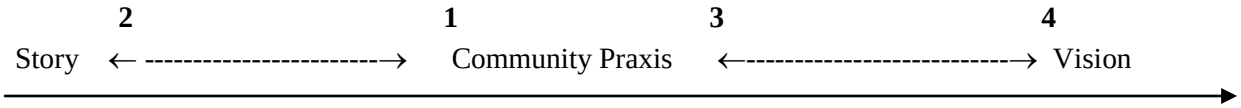
It is at this stage that Browning relies on Tracy's critical correlational theory. Praxis and theory are interlinked in order to generate critical reflection and purposeful change. Praxis, for Browning, is connected with a community's meaning-laden practices, while theory relates to the normative value of Christian traditions.

The value of Browning's approach is that it demonstrates how a hermeneutical understanding can be applied to practical theology. He also shows the need for practical theology to be fundamentally linked to the community praxis and theology which it hopes to critique. Finally, he outlines an approach which enables sociological understandings to be used from within the domain of practical theology.

3.5.2 Present Dialectical Hermeneutics (Thomas Groome)

Groome, on the other hand, sees a four-part process (present dialectical hermeneutics) as one that would enable critique and vision.

Figure 4: Groome's Theological Analysis



Groome defines his shared praxis approach as "a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith" (Groome 1980:184). He explains that "shared praxis takes place in a situation of group dialogue. Shared in the dialogue is an articulation of critical reflection upon one's present active engagement in the world as a Christian. That present engagement is in fact the embodiment of one's own story and vision, and critical reflection upon it takes place in light of the Christian communities' Story and the response which that Story invites.... The *telos* or end of it all is further Christian praxis that is faithful to the Story and creative of its Vision" (ibid.).

3.5.2.1 Story to Praxis

Story is a source of critique for the present (story to present). It affirms, makes us aware of shortcomings, and calls us to live more faithfully.

3.5.2.2 Praxis to Story

We bring our present praxis to the story, bringing consciousness, insights, and needs to the appropriation of the Story—What does the present praxis do to and ask of the Story?

3.5.2.3 Vision to Praxis

Vision functions as a measure of our present praxis. We can discern what to affirm in our present historical praxis. The Vision of the Kingdom enables us to discern the limitations in our present praxis that are not of the Kingdom, and calls us to a Christian praxis that will be more creative of the Kingdom and more faithful to God's invitation. Groome states: "I intend the metaphor *Vision* to be a comprehensive representation of the lived response which the Christian Story invites and of the promise God makes in that Story.... By Vision, then, I mean the Kingdom of God, God's vision for creation" (1980:193).

3.5.2.4 Praxis to Vision

Vision, for Groome, is an open future being shaped in part by present praxis. However, he adds that our knowing of it is possible only as we shape it.

Groome's approach has similar aspects to Browning's in that he, too, is looking for links between theory, praxis, church and society. Thus, his methodology has the same dialectical feel as Browning's. However, Groome deals with the important aspect of "vision" as a critical corrective to theology. Vision implies an almost extra-theoretical element in which the congregation moves beyond history to eschatological fulfilment.

3.5.3 Comparison of Groome and Browning

Groome and Browning are significant in that they deal with many of the dilemmas pointed out in our earlier discussion: (a) the need to be cognisant of the interrelation between church and society, (b) awareness of the cultural-linguistic nature of religious society, (c) faithfulness to the Christian proclamation of the event of the Word of God, (d) theology as a form of critical renewal for the Christian church, and (e) theology that arises from and is based in the community of faith.

Browning gives an *interdisciplinary* approach to practical theology which incorporates not only the different theological disciplines, but also suggests ways for practical theology to relate to other scientific disciplines. Groome gives us two additions: he outlines a way for a *group* to participate in praxis renewal, and he also relates the importance of *vision* as an eschatological reference point for critical renewal.

The use of these approaches shows how we can proceed in our research methodology. In this research project we have utilized a methodology that is specifically theological in character, despite the use of sociological methods.

CHAPTER FOUR: *RESEARCH METHODOLOGY*

4.1 DIMENSIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS (OVERVIEW)

4.1.1 Sociological

This study works within an interdisciplinary paradigm that uses sociological methods to enable qualitative thick description from within a theological hermeneutic. The results of this study will be used for the purpose of helping SDA faith communities in South Africa to respond authentically to a new inter-racial environment, and to enable them to understand how they can best handle the transition to a heterogeneous community.

Personal motivation for this study comes from my involvement with a heterogeneous environment and community. My struggle in understanding the process by which congregations become heterogeneous, and the positive and negative consequences involved in such a transition, have formed the basis for my ongoing interest in this subject.

4.1.2 Ontological Dimension

This study was conducted within the religio-geographical boundaries of SDA communities in South Africa. It focused on congregations as the unit of analysis, and limited its research to three faith communities in this region.

4.1.3 Units of Analysis

This study involves both synchronous and diachronous aspects. The synchronous aspect involves current sociological analysis of three contemporary heterogeneous English-speaking congregations in the metropolitan areas of South Africa. Congregations were chosen according to the following specifications:

1. They were undergoing a transformation process toward a heterogeneous multiracial faith community.
2. They had sufficient commonality to be of basic comparative value.[39]
3. They had a history that could be verified under investigation.
4. They were open to the research process.
5. They fell within the range of 40-250 members (that is, a small to medium-sized congregation within the SDA church).

[39] Case studies are not generally comparative in nature. However, the very fact that more than one case is being studied means that it is hoped that a limited form of comparison will be possible.

Diachronic units of analysis involved historical study of the congregations with ongoing involvement in the communities over a two- to three-year period.

Dialogue with normative texts for the community formed a historical unit of analysis. This was undertaken according to the needs and questions rising from the sociological study above.

4.2 METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

In the following table, an outline of the entire research project is given, with the intention of providing an overview in a schematic way.

Table 1: Overview of Research Methodology

Stage One ***Descriptive*** ***Praxis to Story*** Qualitative analysis of congregations *Horizon analysis*	**Stage Two** ***Historical*** ***Story to Praxis*** Theological ethical enquiry *Theological analysis*	**Stage Three** ***Systematic*** ***Vision to Praxis*** Comparison by analogical analysis *Analogical analysis*	**Stage Four** ***Critical*** ***Praxis to Vision*** Critical reflective process - feedback *Dialectical analysis*
1. Historical analysis of socio-political context	1 Historical analysis of theological response to context	1. Analysis of how the theological hermeneutic critiques the current sociological reality	1. Feedback of proposed direction to congregations for their implementation and evaluation
2.Qualitative analysis of congregations Participant observation Semi-structured interviews	2. Analysis of ethical responses to heterogeneity on the basis of Christian traditions and values	2. Analysis of how the current sociological reality critiques the theological hermeneutic	2. Continuous critical reflection on renewed praxis
3. Survey of congregations A - C.	3. Critical analysis of theological responses.	3. Analogical possibilities arising from comparison of 1 and 2.	
4. Content study of documents relating to congregations A - C.	4. Creative possibilities based on a theological hermeneutic.	4. Toward a pragmatic theological direction (hermeneutic arising from and applied to the situation)	

The insights and methodological concepts of Groome and Browning have formed the basis of this research methodology. The aim of this methodology has been as follows:

a) To outline the procedures by which the research problem was analysed,

b) To develop a framework that meaningfully incorporated both the sociological and theological disciplines,
c) To outline a process that would involve the faith communities in the research program, and
d) To clarify and limit the methodological options that would be used.

The data collection techniques, methodology and analysis of the data will now be discussed for each stage of the research process.

4.2.1 Stage One: Qualitative Analysis of Three Congregations

In this first stage, the unit of analysis under investigation was three SDA congregations in the metropolitan areas of South Africa. For this purpose, congregational analysis along the lines of a case study was used. "The purpose of the case study is to draw inferences from the intensive study of a single group.... An effort is made to describe the group, organisation or subculture in great detail with the aim of gaining an intuitive understanding which can be communicated to others" (Carroll et al. 1990:160; see also Ammerman et al. 1998:196ff).

Drawing on Browning and Geertz, we understand that the primary need in studying people groups, such as a congregation, is to gain an intimate familiarity with the processes, symbols and activities of that group. Browning speaks of "horizon analysis," whereas Geertz speaks of "thick description." The intention is the same—to come to an understanding of the meaning structures that both describe and prescribe the meaning-laden actions of the group.

This stage of the study therefore focused on qualitative as opposed to quantitative data (see earlier section on this subject). Quantitative data was used to supplement qualitative data as a means of gaining statistical information to supplement and enhance insights from observations and interviews.

An overall framework for this approach is developed in the *Handbook for Congregational Studies* by Carroll (1986). The handbook was later heavily revised by Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley and McKinney (1998). This study has drawn heavily upon both "handbooks" for its sociological/anthropological methodology. Besides providing a number of excellent tools for observational analysis, they also base their practical theological framework on the work of Groome and Browning (1998:26-27) in a way very similar to this author's previous master's research design (1997).

The terminology of the second handbook was significantly revised, so it will be important to look at these differences before identifying the particular approach used in this research project. The original

handbook suggested a four-fold approach to congregational studies (see earlier section): process, program, identity and context. The later handbook retained only "process" and substituted three other "frames" from which to view the congregation: ecology, culture and resources (1998:14-16).

After careful consideration, the original framework of the older handbook was retained in this research project. Firstly, this enabled better congregational understanding of the terms employed. Many congregants understood the term "context" much better than "ecology," and it was confusing to speak of both racial culture and congregational culture. It was easier to speak of congregational "identity" and racial "culture" as two separate but intertwined concepts.[40] Secondly, the older handbook's framework was at times more effective for this particular study. For instance, analysing the "program" proved more enlightening than examining the "resources," because there were many significant aspects of the church program that were impacted during racial and cultural transition. However, congregational resources were also examined in a broader sense throughout each of the studies.

Therefore, the following four dimensions of the congregation, as based on the original handbook, form the basis for the methodological procedures followed:

4.2.1.1 Historical Analysis of Socio-Political Context

In this part of the study, I focused on the context of the congregations under study. Since a major theme of this study revolves around narrative, the aim was to show how the larger metanarrative of society and of the SDA denomination affected and impacted upon the congregation's narrative.

The first task in this stage was a diachronic study to gain familiarity with the larger Christian faith "story" of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in South Africa. This was done through a study of historical documents relating to the last hundred years of Seventh-day Adventist heritage in South Africa. Particular attention was paid to racial developments and the progression of a larger Christian story toward heterogeneity.

A second important task was to examine this larger metanarrative as it related to the immediate contexts of the congregations under study. In interviews it became apparent that, theologically, the SDA faith context was extremely significant in the lives of the local faith community. Socially, however, the

[40] Ammerman argues that "culture" is a better term than "identity" because "unlike our usual notions about identity, a culture is neither who we always will be nor who we ought to be." A congregation is therefore a "unique gathering of people with a cultural identity of its own" (Ammerman et al. 1998:78). Identity, however, is not a fixed concept. Within an emerging multicultural congregation, there is the formation of a new "identity" by the congregation dealing precisely with the question of "who are we now that we have more than one cultural group in our midst?" Therefore, it became easier to speak of racial cultures impacting on congregational identity.

broader context of South Africa seemed to determine the prejudices and perspectives, as well as the kind of social interaction between cultures. In part because of this, demographic trends in the local neighbourhood were considered. Therefore, this dissertation relates multiple impacts on the local congregation, including SDA history and broad social and theological forces operating in South Africa.

4.2.1.2 Qualitative Analysis of Congregations

The aim of this stage was to discover the identity of the congregation, describe its programmes and uncover its processes. The main techniques that were used were participant observation, semi-structured open interviews, group discussion and document (content) analysis.

4.2.1.2.1 Identity

Carroll et al. outline seven elements to be considered when establishing the congregation's identity: history, heritage, worldview, symbols, ritual, demography and character (1990).[41] The collection of data for each of these elements is given below:

The gathering of a history of the congregation was based on oral histories existing among the longer-serving members of the congregation as well as congregational histories. Time lines were used on an individual basis, with members of the congregation filling in significant events. The purpose in developing a history was to understand the unfolding story of the congregation, and subsequently how its story has impacted on heterogeneous developments in the congregation.

Understanding the heritage of the congregation came from analysing the "operational beliefs" of the faith community. "Heritage" refers to the way a congregation incorporates the larger tradition of the Christian faith into its own beliefs and practices (Carroll et al. 1986:25-27). The heritage of a congregation was examined by studying:

a) The beliefs held by members as revealed in interviews and surveys;
b) Themes and dominant images communicated by ritual, symbol, didactic and written documents;
c) Behavioural expressions of the congregation's identity as shown by its organisational structures and practices.

[41] In their discussion of "culture," Ammerman et al. cover many of the same aspects as the earlier handbook did in their study of identity. However, they add the important dimensions of language and theologies (1998:94, 98ff). During this research project it became apparent that diverse languages and theologies impacted on the single language and theology of the local congregation. Thus, while the congregation did have a developing identity/culture, that identity/culture was impacted by the importing of new racial cultures.

Another important category outlined by the *Handbook* is the aspect of *worldview*, "the perspective we use to make sense of our total life" (1986:32), and the ways of looking at the world "that answer some of life's most important questions" (Ammerman et al. 1998:96). The understanding of worldview outlined in the earlier discussion of narrative structures formed the basis of the techniques used. The aim was to uncover those narrative structures that guided the congregation as it progressed toward heterogeneity. This was done by examining the language and beliefs of those interviewed, looking for ways to understand how racial culture may have impacted on different worldview perspectives, and how congregational identity was being shaped by the process of multiculturalism.

The analysis of rituals and symbols in the congregation was made more difficult by the very nature of these phenomena. Rituals and symbols denote meanings and motivations beyond their external forms. The task here was to look for particular artifacts, practices, rites and even people that epitomised the congregation's narrative and "underlife."[42] Examining this symbolic world was with a view to discovering how it acts as a model both *to* and *for* the congregation (see Geertz 1973:93). Analysing this kind of world was done through the techniques of "thick description," made possible by participant observation. The aim was to uncover the symbolic world of the congregation and then to relate this symbolic world to the processes taking place in the congregation.[43]

Another aspect of the congregation's identity was uncovered through creating a profile of the congregation. This was particularly important in establishing the degree of diversity within the congregation. The aim here was to discover how the physical characteristics of the members (where they stay, their race, gender, age, etc.) affected and influenced the story of the congregation. The primary method of this analysis was through conducting a congregational survey.

Finally, the character of the congregation was considered as it relates to identity. Character differs from identity in that it specifically deals with the moral dimension of congregational life and "denotes not only what is distinctive but also what is in some measure deliberate, what a man can decide as opposed to what he is naturally" (Hauerwas 1982:52). The primary means of identifying character was through:

a) participant observation
b) guided interviews
c) participation in group discussions revolving around congregational issues.

[42] A concept developed by Erving Goffman to describe theunderlying expectations of an institution and how individuals respond to these demands (*Asylums* 1961).
[43] Here the author follows Geertz's method of studying religion in which he states it is "a two-stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes" (1973:125).

The composite picture of the congregation's identity has been presented in narrative form. This approach is exemplified in recent approaches to congregations (see various examples in Ammerman 1997) and is particularly useful for characterising and understanding the narrative dimensions of the congregation. The aim has been to "tell" the story of how the congregation struggled through paradigmatic change and renewal.

4.2.1.2.2 Process

The next dimension of the research study involved analysing the congregational processes. Process has to do with the way goals are accomplished (Carroll et al. 1990:81-86). Organisational processes affect the congregation in several ways, especially during times of conflict and change. These organisational processes involve the following areas:

1. The manner in which planning takes place
2. How leaders are informed and trained for their roles
3. Informal evaluation and feedback to participants in programs
4. Norms and sanctions outlining acceptable behaviour in the congregation
5. Handling of diversity and conflict
6. How the congregation goes about problem solving.

The aim was to discover the basic flow of the congregation—how values, beliefs and practices determined the accomplishment of goals. At issue is how the congregation's identity impacts on the various interactions of congregational life. Discovering the process of the congregation was done through many of the methods described above:

a) Direct observation
b) Documents
c) Questionnaires
d) Interviews
e) Group discussions.

4.2.1.2.3 Program

The third dimension of the research study in this first stage had to do with the congregation's program. Program has to do with structures, plans and activities through which the congregation expresses its mission and ministry (Carroll et al. 1990:120). Two main kinds of assessment of the congregation's program were carried out. Firstly, as part of the congregational survey, there was a needs assessment

analysis with the objective of discovering how the programs are meeting or not meeting the needs of the various groups (especially racial and ethnic ones) within the congregation. Secondly, in interviews, members were asked to evaluate the congregation's programs in terms of the following:

- How effective is the program in achieving its goals?
- Is the underlying purpose of the program acceptable to both participants and planners?
- Is the program in keeping with the congregational mission?
- Which groups/individuals actively participate in the program?
- What are the reasons for participation in the program?
- What is the experience and degree of satisfaction of those who participate in the program?

4.2.1.2.4 Questionnaire

A congregational questionnaire was used to enhance findings discovered through the techniques of participant observation and interviews. This questionnaire aimed to discover the following:

- A profile of the church, including racial/ethnic distribution
- Congregational and individual perspectives on identity
- Clarification on congregational processes, as well as personal frustration with those processes
- Evaluation of perceived value of the congregational programme as well as a needs assessment for future programs
- Survey of attitudes toward a variety of issues, especially with regard to race and culture.

Advanced statistical analysis and causal relations was not the primary objective of this quantitative study. The results of this questionnaire were used to further inform and critique the qualitative methodology outlined above.

4.2.2 Stage Two: Theological Analysis

The first part of this study involves "horizon analysis," that is, a thorough sociological understanding of three congregations who are becoming heterogeneous. This is primarily an understanding of their meaning-laden praxis, especially as it has related to their transition from a homogeneous to a heterogeneous community. However, in this next stage there is an attempt to move beyond a simple descriptive role to a formulation of the fundamental question: What should be expected of this kind of community in the light of the Christian tradition and its vision? This stage is therefore, primarily, a theological analysis—a questioning of our praxis on the basis of how it relates to the event of the Word of God (in both its incarnational and eschatological elements).

The praxis of the community formed the basis from which the questions and goals of the theological inquiry arose.

Three major areas provide normative value for Christian praxis. Each of these areas is a metanarrative informing and guiding the congregational narrative. Theological thinking requires an examination of each of these areas as part of the "Christian lifeworld" (Pannenberg [1973] 1976:434) which informs our praxis. These three are:

- Scripture
- Christian heritage and tradition
- Societal norms and values.[44]

The interrelationship between these three areas is best studied through dialectical thought which attempts to find answers by a dynamic engagement between the first two aspects and the last one. This kind of thinking is seen in both Browning (1991) and Tracy (1981, 1983) as they strive for a critical correlation between society and normative Christian traditions.

The aim in this stage is to critique the theory which guides the actions of the congregation. What kind of theory should be the basis of the congregational narrative as the congregation seeks to fulfil its sacramental role as an emissary of the kingdom of God? Furthermore, what does the congregational context require for an adequate theory? We have to ask what kind of theory would most authentically proclaim the event of the Word of God (Firet 1986:48, 49) in this congregation's context.

Answers to these kinds of questions form the basis of the careful "systematic" thought to which Browning refers (see earlier section). This process can also suggest ways in which the Christian "story" can critique and influence the current praxis in the congregation (Groome 1980:192).

The method here moves from a theoretical-historical investigation to a theological hermeneutic. A further task has been to clarify the theoretical constructs that form the basis of a meaningful theological analysis of the congregation's metanarratives. These narratives were compared with each other as well as with congregational praxis.

[44] The inclusion of this last element may seem to fly in the face of Christianity's traditional stance against culture. However, as Niebuhr (1951) points out, Christianity's relation to culture is a dynamic and fluid one, which a number of theologically defensible relations between the two (see *Christ and Culture*).

4.2.2.1 Historical Analysis of Theological Thought

The first part of this process was to review and analyse theological responses to the shift between homogeneity and heterogeneity as demonstrated in the congregations under study. This involved historical analysis of narratives that informed congregational praxis in South Africa

The next part of the process involved developing a theological understanding of the move toward heterogeneity. Is such a move biblical? Is it based on sound theological thinking? Is it cognisant of society's norms and values, and if not, why not? What should be expected of this form of congregation in the light of Christian traditions and values?

4.2.2.2 Development of a Theological Paradigm

Such thinking involves the development of a paradigm with the kind of theoretical constructs that enable fruitful theological understanding of the research problem. The following indicates some of the theological concepts examined in this section:

- The role of post-modern thinking, especially with regard to non-foundationalism and pluralism (see Brueggemann 1993, Tracy and Küng 1991),
- The impact of culture on theological thinking, especially as it relates to the construction of theological values and ideas (see Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* 1951, Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures* 1991, Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* 1978, Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* 1985, and Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* 1988),
- The impact of sociology on practical theology, especially the influence of sociological theories and concepts on theological models (see Browning 1991, Lovin 1992),
- The role of post-colonial theology, especially as it relates to themes of reconciliation and models of humanity (Schreiter 1985, Mosala & Thlagale 1986, Setiloane & Peden 1988, DeYoung 1997), and
- Theological models of inclusion and hospitality (Foster 1996; Volf 1996; Law 2000; Pohl 1999; Koenig 2001).

Further definition of theoretical constructs involved the "fleshing out" of concepts which are of vital importance to this study, such as:

- the role of ethnicity, race and culture as they relate to congregational change,
- concepts of homogeneous and heterogeneous churches (discussed above),
- hospitality to the stranger as a theological concept,
- diversity and pluralism, and
- unity of the church.

Each of these concepts required the preciseness of theological thinking so as to enhance their use in formulating a theological hermeneutic.

Establishing the theological hermeneutic itself was done through drawing together the major elements of the theological responses and using a paradigmatic framework to establish a narrative that is consistent with the larger Christian story within its current context. This narrative arose out of the theological conversation of the historical responses as they were worked out in a post-modern confessional paradigm.

4.2.2.3 Critique of Theological Hermeneutic

This narrative was then critiqued by reference to the three normative metanarratives referred to above. Questions asked included:

- How does this understanding hold up when subjected to the examining light of scripture, Christian tradition and societal norms?
- Does this understanding violate the normative traditions of the congregations being studied?

4.2.2.4 Creative Theological Thinking

The final section of this stage involved creative theological thinking looking at the ways in which theological understanding suggested new ways of being a faith community in harmony with both normative traditions and eschatological vision.

4.2.3 Stage Three: Analogical Analysis

This stage involved a movement from theory to praxis and back to theory. The aim was to use the theological hermeneutic to suggest ways in which the praxis of the congregation might be more faithful to its metanarratives. The central question concerned how the identity, program and process of the congregation might be transformed by a better theological understanding. Correspondingly, the related task was to refine current theological understanding so that it adequately provides a model both "of and for" the congregation (see earlier discussion on Geertz).

The primary task in this section was to provide an eschatological and biblical standpoint from which to critique the praxis of the congregation. This eschatological standpoint is a "creative vision based on the possibilities of the Christian faith." This vision is a "pragmatic theological direction"—that is, a theological vision that bears a practical orientation.

4.2.3.1 Analogical Thinking

The movement here was twofold: from theory to praxis and from praxis to theory. One to two[45] group discussions were held with each church. The intention in each case was to refine the applied theological hermeneutic. This was done, firstly, by critiquing the current narrative and praxis of the congregation by making reference to the greater metanarratives of which they are a part. Secondly, the relation of these metanarratives to the current narrative of the congregation was questioned analogically through a process of group discussion. The quest was to adequately understand both the large and small narratives in their relation to each other (see Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination* 1981). In this group dialogue, church boards were able to respond to and critique the research insights of the project. In addition, a visioning process was undertaken in which each board examined what it was called to become in the light of its history and vision. Racial and cultural components were included as part of a larger picture of the emerging narrative of the church.

4.2.3.2 Developing a Vision for the Congregation

When it is felt that adequate dialogue over the applied theological hermeneutic has taken place, a new vision for each congregation will begin to arise for the congregation. The congregations are already moving in the direction toward heterogeneity. How should they proceed so as to adequately proclaim the kingdom of God? What vision should propel the congregation toward its eschatological fulfilment? The final phase of this stage was to develop a proposed direction for each congregation based on the pragmatic needs of the congregation and its response to its Story and Vision.

4.2.4 Stage Four: Dialectical Analysis

This final stage takes us to the end of our research study, but only to the beginning of congregational renewal. The proposed pragmatic theological direction is being fed back to each congregation for their evaluation and implementation. The primary need is to see whether the proposed direction for the congregation is feasible or even appropriate. A secondary and underlying quest was to examine whether such an approach to congregational study could achieve the aims which this research proposal has suggested.

As the congregations begin to apply and implement the strategies suggested and look critically at their own theological understandings and narratives, it is hoped that their praxis will begin to more authentically point to the Christian vision of which it is just a part.

[45] This number has been limited for the purposes of the research study. Ideally, this should be an ongoing exercise in the congregation.

4.3 EVALUATION OF WEAKNESSES

The research programme that I have outlined in this dissertation had several potential pitfalls. The very breadth attempted in this approach enhanced the complexity of the study and the possibility of error.

4.3.1 Time and Geographical Factors

My original proposal outlined four stages. Due to the difficulty of completing each of these stages in a timely manner, the final and fourth stage will need to be implemented more fully after this study project has ended. It may have been that the diachronous aspect of the study absorbed so much of the research time that there was not adequate time for sufficient theological reflection. There was a need for more time in involving the community in the theological process.

Basing the research on three different cities also involved a challenge in that financial constraints prohibited ongoing participatory involvement in those communities over an extended period of time.

4.3.2 Limitations of a Questionnaire

The use of a social survey had several limitations. Firstly, it tended to be filled in by those who were educated and had the conceptual and linguistic skills for understanding the questions. Secondly, it tended to have a lower response from poorer blacks and coloureds who, through lack of exposure, were wary of the instrument. It is known that the length of questionnaires is often a deterrent to filling them in. However, it was ensured that adequate time was taken to explain the importance of these questionnaires, and thus the congregations were motivated to fill them out. A large number of them were returned, and in general they were quite usable. Since all three congregations were mainly made up of people with a fairly high level of education, most members were able to complete the questionnaire. Several revisions were made of the questionnaire to keep it as brief and simple as possible.

4.3.3 Unwillingness to Participate

One of the most significant problems that could have affected this research project would have been a lack of participation, involvement and commitment from the faith communities being studied. This could, in effect, have thwarted the very purposes of this study. To counter this problem, the following strategy was implemented:

1. Congregations open to change were chosen.
2. There was a constant relay of information to and from the congregation in each stage of the study.
3. The research was presented as potentially bringing helpful insights to the congregation.
4. A rapport was developed with congregational leadership.

5. A distinctly spiritual context was emphasized, which left room for the working of the Holy Spirit on the congregation.

Any change in a congregation tends to be stressful, traumatic and confusing. This would seem to be especially true of congregations in a transitional process toward heterogeneity. The researcher's task was to help the members understand their dilemma as well as to provide a context for meaningful change. In this respect, realism was necessary: the faith communities were likely to move (and did move) in directions that the researcher did not see as helpful or theologically ideal. It was necessary to allow these congregations the freedom to grow according to their own vision and hermeneutical limitations. This experience was necessarily part of the overall research process.

4.3.4 Subjective Biases

Following on the discussion above, there was a distinct danger that the researcher's own biases would both frustrate and hinder the research project. This was especially true because of the nature of qualitative studies, a point dealt with earlier in this chapter. Denzin's concept of triangulization (1978) was used, in which he suggests that this problem can be overcome by the utilising of different tools in the observation process:

1. multiple data sources—as many concrete situations as possible to form an observational base
2. multiple methods
3. multiple perspectives—participants' accounts of their behaviour compared with alternative theoretical schemes.

4.3.5 Rational and Spiritual Elements

Finally, the methodology outlined shows a rational-methodological approach to understanding and directing transitional changes in the local church. A possible weakness is that in so doing it downplayed the essentially spiritual element of congregational renewal. Ultimately, congregations are not simply rational and social enterprises. Rather, they make the bold claim to be a converted community of faith. This spiritual element was taken into account by:

1. operating within the context of prayer and spiritual guidance
2. asking (especially from stage two onwards) how the congregation related to its theological vision
3. ensuring the researcher's own willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit.

While any study in practical theology must show rational coherence, it is equally important that it respond to the movement of God through His Holy Spirit. Any change in the community in response to this

movement will thus be a response of faith and conversion. This makes meaningful change in the faith community not only possible, but realistic.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This section discussed the research methodology of this study project. It showed how the theoretical insights developed in section two could be applied to the study of congregations in transition toward heterogeneity. It explained a four-fold process through which implementation of a critical theory of praxis was attempted. It also looked at the weaknesses in this approach and discussed ways in which the researcher tried to overcome these obstacles.

The aim has thus been to develop a research strategy that pays attention to the narrative nature of the congregation, does theology from within faith communities, remains true to its confessional nature, uses the hermeneutical techniques of dialectical theology and thus develops a critical theory of praxis.

CHAPTER FIVE: *RACE RELATIONS AND THE SDA CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA*

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Every congregation exists in relation to a broader environment. This broader context can be called the "ecology" of the congregation (Ammerman et al. 1998:14, 40-41). Ecology refers to the "web" of interactions by which the church both influences and is influenced by its regional, institutional and global environment (ibid. 15). Ammerman and Warner identify congregational ecology as broad in scope (extending from the local neighbourhood to the global community, and from the present to the past to the future). They also speak of it having several layers (demographics, culture and organization). Each of these is aimed at discovering the web of networks that impact on the local congregation (ibid. 41-42).

Since congregational narratives are considered a primary means for looking at faith communities, this study looks at the broader ecological context using a narrative lens. We will begin with the organizational influence on the local congregations in terms of the broader history of the Seventh-day Adventist church (both in and outside of South Africa), particularly with regard to race relations. Since Seventh-day Adventism requires Sabbath-keeping on Saturday, people who become Adventists do not generally attend Sunday-keeping churches. Thus, Sunday-keeping churches in the surrounding community do not typically impact a Seventh-day Adventist congregation. For most Adventists, church life is impacted by two determining forces: (a) denominational history, movements and theology, and (b) general societal trends. These are the two particular narratives that we shall consider here. Specific neighbourhood contexts will be dealt with more fully in the chapters dealing with each particular congregation being studied.

5.1 THE HISTORY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

The Seventh-day Adventist Church arose out of the Millerite movement in America in the 1840s. William Miller was part of a widespread millenarianism fever that pervaded England and North America in the early nineteenth century. William Miller believed that Christ would come in 1843 or 1844. Some of his adherents declared that Christ would return to the earth on October 22, 1844. Although the predicted event never took place, leading to what has been termed as the "Great Disappointment," the expectation of a returning Messiah helped to shape and define the early Adventist movement.

This movement was soon fragmented into a number of dissenting voices, with the Sabbatarian Adventists later becoming the most prominent. This fledgling group found particular leadership under Joseph Bates, James White and Ellen White. By 1850, after a series of biblically-based conferences, the basic doctrines

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had taken shape (Land 1986:40). Although there were differences of interpretation, the leaders of this new movement had by this time accepted that the Bible—and the Bible only—was to be their rule of faith and duty; the law of God was immutable (which also meant the binding obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath); the imminent and personal return of Christ, the conditional immortality of the soul, and the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary after 1844 in the blotting out of sins (Land 1986:41). By 1863, the Adventist believers had formed themselves into an organized church under the name "Seventh-day Adventists," and were a well-organised and evangelistically successful new denomination with 3,500 members and 125 churches.

The early Adventist leaders were not particularly vociferous about race issues. Although Joseph Bates had previously participated in the anti-slavery societies of the 1830s, it appears that his social reform activities became limited under the new pressures of his leadership in the developing Adventist movement. For various reasons, "the Adventism that emerged after the Great Disappointment was essentially an all-white movement that embodied the prejudiced attitudes and experienced the racial problems of America as a whole" (Bull and Lockhart 1989:193). Although it is clear that many early Adventist leaders were opposed to slavery and supported the North in the slavery debate (Land 1986:45), it seems that much of the rhetoric had more to do with their eschatological understanding of America in prophecy than effecting social reform (Bull and Lockhart 1989:194). A particular example of this is James White's statement in an editorial published in 1862: "For the past ten years the *Review* has taught that the United States of America were a subject of prophecy, and that slavery is pointed out in the prophetic word as the darkest and most damning sin upon this nation. It has taught that Heaven has wrath in store for the nation which it would drink to the very dregs, as due punishment for slavery."

In fact, it is clear that this eschatological framework was the key element of Adventism in relation to almost any political issue. "When the matters of slavery or the government's handling of related problems appeared at all, the *Review* referred to the nation as the 'two horned beast' (Revelation 13) and held out little hope for finding a man-made solution, especially since the church leaders believed that prophecy indicated otherwise" (Land 1986:45). Thus the early Adventist perspective of race relations was viewed not from personal moral involvement, but from prophetic understandings of the United States as the lamblike beast of Revelation.

It was not until the 1870s, when evangelistic endeavours brought them into contact with "coloreds" in the South, that Adventism encountered blacks in significant numbers (Bull and Lockhart 1989:194). At these meetings, Adventists encountered a pattern of segregation existing in the South, to which they as northerners had never really been exposed. Elbert B. Lane, the first Adventist minister in the South, reported holding meetings in a Tennessee depot building with "white people occupying one room, and the

colored the other" (as quoted in Bull and Lockhart 1989:194). It was obviously an arrangement which they were unfamiliar with, and in 1876 Dudley Canright expressed surprise and described it as "something new—the whites all seated inside the house and the colored people all outside—an invariable custom through the South" (*Review*, May 25, 1876:166).

The critical question that began to arise at that time whether it would be appropriate to accept the prevailing segregation in the South, or whether there should be an attempt to bring about integration. The initial Adventist response appears to have been in support of segregation so as to enable further evangelism among the whites. Canright argued that evangelism among the freedmen had to be a distinct mission: "A man can not labour for them and for the whites too, as the white would not associate with him if he did," he wrote in the church paper, the *Review*. "There is no objection to labouring for them and teaching them, but it must be separately" (ibid.). This kind of view resulted in the setting up of homogeneous congregations, with the first all-black Adventist church being established in Edgefield, Tennessee in 1886. In 1895, this spread to the Adventist education system, and a separate college (Oakwood College) was set up at Huntsville, Alabama to train "colored" workers in the South.

This basic position of segregation was to be debated more fully in the 1890s when the leading voice in Adventism, Ellen White, began to call for work among the "coloreds" in the South. Her statements showed a remarkable (for the time) moral and theological stance against racism.

> The Lord's eye is upon all His creatures and makes no difference between white and black, except that He has a special, tender pity for those who are called to bear a greater burden than others…. Men may have both hereditary and cultivated prejudices, but when the love of Jesus fills the heart, and they become one with Christ, they will have the same spirit that He had. If a colored brother sits by their side they will not be offended or despise him. They are journeying to the same heaven, and will be seated at the same table to eat bread in the kingdom of God. If Jesus is abiding in our hearts we cannot despise the colored man who has the same Saviour abiding in his heart (Manuscript 6, 1891, published in *The Southern Work* 1966:9-14).

"Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or creed," she pointed out in *The Ministry of Healing*, "Christ came to break down every wall of partition" (1905:25). Writing in *Christ's Object Lessons,* she further elaborated, "All men are one family by creation, and all are one by redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God" (1900:386).

Her comments on segregation are particularly interesting. Writing in 1895, she stated, "Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on

them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors" (*Review and Herald*, Dec 17, 1895).

Her stand, which is still recognized as prophetically significant by Adventist blacks today (Baker 1995:83ff; Pollard ed. 2000:104ff), was further consolidated by other prominent Adventist leaders, especially in the North. John Harvey Kellogg in particular did not subscribe to the principle of the "colour line," and supported other Adventists who defied it (Graybill 1970:61-64). It appears that there were integrated schools and churches in the North, and that there were some attempts to continue this same practice in the South on a moral basis. Richard Schwarz, a contemporary Adventist historian, writes, "From the start of their operations in the South, Adventists had been troubled about the problem of whether or not to integrate their churches and meetings. Determined not to recognize any color line, leaders who were trained in the North soon found that when they invited 'the colored people' to share freely and equally with the Whites, then the result [was] that the White population [stayed] away" (quoted from a letter by O. A. Olsen, president of the church, 8 November 1894 in Land 1986:116). In the early days, it appears that in some places like Knoxville, Tennessee, it was possible for whites and blacks to meet together. However, most places met with resistance. This was particularly emphasised by the experience of Ellen White's son Edson, when he began work in the South.

Edson White set out with a missionary boat down the Mississippi River in 1894. His primary method involved the setting up welfare work and vocational night schools for the black community. These proved to be highly unpopular among the white planters of the South, who began warning the whites about "meddling" with the "coloreds." The situation deteriorated until there was looting, lynching and mob violence (Graybill 1970:56-57). Against this background, Edson White began to write letters to the church leaders and particularly his mother describing the situations he faced, and urging the use of caution.

The result was a temporary shift in the church's policy of integration that was to have long-lasting impact. For the sake of evangelistic expediency, Ellen White wrote, "The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem. So far as possible, everything that would stir up the race prejudice of the white people should be avoided. There is danger of closing the door so that our white laborers will not be able to work in some places in the South." (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9:214). It is clear that Ellen White's concern was for evangelism and the continued work in the South. Speaking to a "Negro" congregation in Tennessee on April 25, 1909, she said: "As this work is continued, we will find prejudice arise, and this will be manifested in various ways; but we must have wisdom to labor in such a way that we shall not lose the interest of either party, the white or the colored" (as quoted in Graybill 1970:85).

Accommodation to the "color line" in the South soon spread to the North as racial antagonism spread throughout America in the early 1900s, and as Jim Crow segregation ideas gained a foothold. Ellen White herself seems to have reluctantly accepted this practice of segregation saying that we should follow it "until the Lord shows us a better way." (*Testimonies for the Church,* Volume 9:206). Commenting on this trend in Adventism, Bull and Lockhart suggest that "what began as an evangelistic expedient eventually became the denomination's preferred method of dealing with races, especially as the black membership grew" (1989:197). Indeed, as more blacks came into the church, the pattern of institutional segregation became more entrenched. In 1927 the Riverside Sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee was created specifically for blacks. In 1934, a black magazine, *Message*, alongside the church's other publications, was founded.

However, the most important institutional segregation came through the formation of separate black regional conferences in 1944. This followed a particularly nasty racial incident in which a black Adventist, Lucy Byard, was refused treatment at the Adventist Washington Sanitarium because of her colour. She was rushed to another hospital, but died of pneumonia before she could be properly treated. This caused an uproar among the church's black lay and administrative leadership. Initially, it appears that many of the blacks were simply calling for greater opportunities in the white-dominated Adventist structures and institutions. However, this was interpreted by the white leadership as a call for separate conferences. The white leaders then pushed this new development through (Koranteng-Pipim 2001:386-389).

While Adventism theoretically espoused the principle of racial equality, in practice it bowed to the politics of segregation prevailing in America. A. W. Spalding's comment in an unpublished history of black Adventist work could be said to be typical of many Adventists' attitude to race. "Injustice and oppression are repugnant to the Christian; pride and disdain are foreign to his heart; but his Christian experience should not therefore lead him to start a crusade against customs which do not interfere with his Christian duty" (not dated, 142.) It was this policy of avoiding societal conflict, and thus not getting involved in social reform, that appears to have stymied the early church's attempts at integration.

However, by the late 1950s in America, the pressure within and without the Adventist church was beginning to impact on administrative approaches to the race issue. In 1961, after some pressure from black Adventists, a committee was appointed on race relations. The committee members drafted a statement for the church's annual council. The statement affirmed that the church recognizes no distinction of race, color, or nationality (Autumn Council 1961: pp. 12-13).

The positive but passive approach to racial issues encouraged but also held back desegregation in the denomination. For instance, when civil rights marches took place in America in the 1960s, F. D. Nichol, in an editorial in the church's newspaper, the *Review*, wrote against social protest as a means for helping the "underprivileged." "We have ever felt that we can best reveal true Christianity and thus best advance the Advent cause, by taking the more quiet and perhaps indirect approach to problems that so often arouse human passions" (*Adventist Review*, April 29, 1965:12). However, the same issue also carried actions of the General Conference committee that called for the ending of racial discrimination in the denomination's schools, hospitals and churches (ibid.:16).

The next year the General Conference session established a Human Relations Committee and adopted a resolution that "No Wall of Partition" was to exist between the races within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the next five years significant strides were made to making these institutions accessible to Adventists of all races. However, even blacks realised that latent white racism in the church hindered their advancement, and several of them continued to call for the establishment of completely separate administrative structures for blacks in the form of black unions (Rock 1978:3).

In 1978, the annual council responded to the growing need to grapple with the race issue and established an Office of Ethnic Affairs (which was later renamed the Office of Human Relations), which was assigned the roles of promoting cultural interaction. It also adopted a statement on human and race relations to be included in the *Church Manual.* In the mid-eighties, in response to a swelling cry to deal with the *apartheid* situation in South Africa, the Seventh-day Adventist Church president finally sent out a statement condemning *apartheid* and racism. However, it was not until 1999 that a race relations summit was held at which the North-American Division made a concerted attempt through plenary sessions and working groups to come up with identifiable ways to combat racism. However, in spite of these "bold initiatives" as they are called, the church in America still remains divided into two major camps,[46] one "white" and the other "black." Regional (black) conferences still exist and seem destined to continue for some time.

This brief history of the beginning and development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America through the particular lens of racial relations reveals several important facts. Firstly, it is clear that from its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has officially viewed racism negatively and has, at least in theory, advocated the equality of the races. However, it is also clear that a policy of segregation came to be accepted as the norm and that latent racism has been the cause of continuing "separate development" policies and practices. It is also beyond dispute that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has

[46] Samuel Koranteng-Pipim dubs this "two churches" and calls for the elimination of black conferences in his book, *Must We Be Silent?* (2001).

remained relatively quiet over racial injustices, often overlooking gross inconsistencies in both itself and the wider society. Its prophetic voice was signally silent in times when the very humanity of other races was being trampled upon.[47]

There is a twist to this story, and one that any student of church growth will immediately recognize. While separate development policies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America resulted in injustice, oppression, racism, prejudice and sometimes outright discrimination, it also led to remarkable church growth. The policy of training black workers to work for black people, and of accommodating to the prejudice in the society in which they lived, ensured "cultural space" whereby each community could develop according to its own rhythm and rhyme and with particular focuses on particular needs. In many ways, then, the black and white churches in America developed with very different liturgical and administrative styles adapted to the condition and needs of the people to whom they ministered.

Here is the great paradox of race relations, and one with which the Seventh-day Adventist Church across the globe has consistently struggled. An emphasis on unity and desegregation seem to lead to greater harmony and help to remove prejudices. However, such an emphasis also seems to retard church growth and evangelism among all people groups. The question that burns in many of the church leaders' minds is this: how do we allow individual cultural and contextual development of Adventism without destroying church unity and brotherly love? Put differently, how can contextualism be enhanced without parochialism resulting?

The diverse and international makeup of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is now its greatest challenge. Founded as a white, North American fledgling ecclesial movement in the wake of prophetic disappointment, it has now become a worldwide body with more than ten million members, of which 90 percent live outside of North America. Furthermore, the church is growing most rapidly outside of North America. Hence the cultural issue has become more than just a passing conflict—it is actually rooted at the very heart of a church body that has attempted to maintain its administrative, theological and ecclesial unity in the midst of increasing pluralism and growing diversity in its ranks, as William Johnsson indicates in *The Fragmenting of Adventism* (1995).

Seventh-day Adventists, however, continue to see unity as a fundamental part of their mission. As one General Conference president noted:

[47] See the attached appendix of the report given by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1997, in which it was stated, "As a church we failed to truly *be* the *church* (the "called-out ones") by both our tendency to avoid the suffering that accompanies true discipleship, and our silence in the face of the suffering of others" (page 2).

> The Seventh-day Adventist Church is engaged in a divine experiment. What is that experiment? In a world that is becoming fragmented along racial, ethnic, age, gender and economic lines, we are attempting to build one people, united in Jesus Christ to meet Him at His appearing (Robert Folkenberg as quoted in Baker ed. 1995:15).

Folkenberg's comments were printed in a book that gained wide circulation among Seventh-day Adventist ministers and laymen (and was freely distributed to all ministers in South Africa). *Make Us One* (Baker, editor 1995) was an appeal for the church to take unity seriously, and was a combination of practical and theological counsel on respecting diversity while affirming unity.

In 2000, another book was widely distributed to South African ministers, entitled *Embracing Diversity*. Although less comprehensive than Baker's book, it nevertheless showed that race relations were still at the forefront of the church's thinking. In an interview with Manuel Vasquez, a vice-president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Vasquez makes the following statement, "The next millennium will be the millennium, especially in this division, of multiculturalism. If our church does not seriously address multicultural ministry, cross-cultural ministry, it is going to be left behind" (Pollard ed. 2000:145).

5.3 RACE RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

In a remarkable way, the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa was to closely parallel its North American counterpart, especially in the area of race relations. A brief history will once again orient us as to the times and development of this group.

In 1885, Pieter Wessels and George J. van Druten were two Dutch residents in the Kimberly area who began to observe the seventh-day Sabbath through personal Bible study (Schwartz 1979:224). On the diamond fields of Kimberly, they came into contact with William Hunt, a man who had been converted to Seventh-day Adventism on the gold fields of Nevada in the United States fifteen years before (Swanepoel 1972:1). Hunt shared with them Seventh-day Adventist literature that he had brought with him, and as a result Pieter Wessels and his family were converted to the new faith. After a few months, Hunt sent a letter to the General Conference in America on behalf of van Druten and Wessels, requesting that a Dutch-speaking minister be sent to South Africa. They included 50 pounds for the expense (Swanepoel 1972:6).

As a result of this request, in 1887, two ministers, two literature evangelists and a Bible instructor were sent to Cape Town to begin the Seventh-day Adventist work in South Africa. However, the request for a Dutch minister could not be fulfilled (due to the lack of any Dutch ministers in the church), and the new

missionaries were English-speaking. Within a few months, twenty-six charter members were organized in Kimberly into the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa. From these humble beginnings, the Seventh-day Adventist church began to plant itself in various regions of South Africa, and by 1894 had even begun its first missionary expedition to Matabeleland (Zimbabwe).

What is significant in this early period from the perspective of race relations is that the missionaries ensured that these early Adventist institutions were open to children of all races (Pantalone 1996:55; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia* 1996:686). The issue of different race groups, however, brought about a sharp response, with some of the constituency threatening to withdraw their children (Pantalone 1996:131). Pieter Wessels was one such person who objected to the non-exclusive nature of the Claremont Union College being run in Cape Town.

> "SO [sic] there is a colour line wtich [sic] is very distinctly drawn here in society. For my part I do not care [sic] I can shake hand [sic] with the colored [sic] people and so forth. But our association with them is going to spoil our influence [sic] with others who are accustomed to these things… to have an anfluance [sic] with the Higher [sic] class of people we must respect these difderances [sic]. As far as we can. [sic] Further more [sic] I do not want my children to associate with the lower classes or colored [sic] people. I will labor for them and teach my children to do so but I do not want my children to mix up with them for such is detrimental to their moral well fare [sic] Nor do I want my children to think there is no diferance [sic] in so ciety [sic] that they should finally associate and marry into colored [sic] blood…" (Letter from Pieter Wessels to Ellen G. White, January 14, 1893, as quoted in Pantalone 1996:132).

According to Robinson, the leadership did not initially concede to these demands, and coloured and African students were allowed to remain at the college (Robinson, n.d.: 76-77), but such underlying prejudice must have had some effect, for no African, Indian or coloured students remained long enough to graduate from the college (Pantalone 1996:132).

Such early indications of racial tension show how the impact of societal trends impacted on the practical theological applications of the church.

5.3.1 Seventh-day Adventists and Education in South Africa

Seventh-day Adventist education in South Africa was to eventually divide into three separate systems along the lines of race. An African training school was started in the Eastern Cape near Grahamstown in 1909, eventually being transferred to an area near Butterworth in the Transkei. Unlike the elaborate buildings and structures of the white college, initial construction was rather limited with small, mud-walled structures and thatched roofs serving as the first buildings. The first training school for the coloureds was begun in Salt River in 1929, and later transferred to Athlone as the Good Hope College.

Pantalone points to the marked disparity between the facilities at the white and coloured training schools, with Helderberg College having had extensive funding with a number of well-built buildings, whereas at Good Hope College, for instance, an old weathered tent was used as the boys' dormitory (1986:133).

However, despite these rudimentary beginnings, both schools went on to become successful institutions in their Adventist communities, and were seen as prompting and supporting church growth among the different people groups (see Pantalone 1986:135; Thompson 1977:145; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia* 1976:152).

Looking back on the development of the separate lines of educational work in the country, one is struck again with the paradox. One the one hand, there was a very definite accommodation to the existing racism and prejudice of the country. On the other hand, the policy of separate development that ensued did seem to promote rather than hinder church growth. One evidence of this was the significant growth that occurred among the different racial groups. While we do not have a precise breakdown of these different groups, we can draw certain deductions. Church statistics show that Seventh-day Adventist membership in the entire Africa Division grew by a staggering total of 218 percent over a seven-year period from 1918-1925. "White" membership growth was 72 percent, while "native" membership growth was an impressive 325 percent. This huge growth came mainly from the missionary programs to the north of South Africa, where the training of local teachers and evangelists was begun almost immediately, and may have been a vital factor in the self-propagation of the new church (Pantalone 1986:136). Pantalone argues that the inadequate training of local non-European workers severely hindered the growth among local people groups in South Africa in contrast to the rapid and dynamic expansion to the north (Pantalone 1986:137-138).

Bethel College was known during the apartheid years as not subscribing to "apartheid education" introduced in 1953, and even played a role in the education of some of Nelson Mandela's children (Khonjwayo 2001:8).

However, Both Bethel and Helderberg Colleges became exclusively divided along racial lines. Political and societal pressures began to lead the church education system away from a policy of separate development to one of integration. In the 1970s, Helderberg College finally opened to coloured students,[48] and in 1991 the theological program at Bethel was moved to Helderberg, whereupon black students started to attend in significant numbers. Since then, the transition has been very rapid, and the

[48] A personal interview with the family who sent the first coloured student indicated how difficult this was for the institution. The family asked for their son to attend, but the college told them that it was against the law. The family then wrote to the department of education and it told them that there was no legal reason to prohibit their son from attending. The college, embarrassed by the situation, finally accepted the student.

current dormitories at Helderberg College are over 90 percent "black." In a corresponding movement, white student enrolment has dropped dramatically, and there are concerns among white members of the denomination that Helderberg has become a "black institution."

5.3.2 Seventh-day Adventists and Organizational Structures

The Seventh-day Adventist organizational structures also show interesting racial developments. From 1887 until 1920, work in South Africa was ministered to by a single organizational structure that catered for both "whites" and "natives." This changed in 1920, when the Southern Union Mission was formed, which took responsibility for missions ("native work") while the "white work" was managed by the South African Union Conference (SAUC) (Thompson 1977:35). However, this arrangement only lasted one year, and for financial and organizational reasons, these two structures were amalgamated into one body, the SAUC (Thompson 1977:55-58). Under this arrangement, the white conferences became responsible for work among the non-European population. However, by 1925, it was felt that the Conferences were neglecting "native work" and placing a greater emphasis on the white population. As a result, two new mission fields were established to cater for the non-European work, with these fields operating under the jurisdiction of the SAUC (Thompson 1977:55-58). The jurisdiction of native ministers in this field was still largely controlled, however, by whites:

> Native ministers had the right to baptize with the approval of the Mission Field executive committee regarding such candidates for baptism, and could administer the ordinances of the church such as Holy Communion and Foot-Washing. But they were in no case to take precedence over a European church elder (Thompson 1977:32).

The "missionaries" to South Africa were as much caught up in this patronizing state of affairs as were the local South Africans. In the 1931 Working Policy of the SDA church in South Africa, the caption under "Hints to Our Missionaries" reads:

> It is not customary for Europeans to entertain natives at meals, and the native does not expect it. If you wish to give one a meal, let him eat it outside from a place kept especially for natives.
>
> Teach your mission students to shake hands only when you, or any white, makes an advance. It is most embarrassing to have a native come up to you in the streets of a city and offer to shake hands. You may not mind, but others will look askance at you and it will bring discredit to your work (Constitution, By-laws, Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [Southern African Division, 1931], 139 as quoted in Koranteng-Pipim 2001:308).

Thus, native work, even though it was given some measure of freedom, largely operated within the confines and the dictates of white control and prejudices.

In the 1960s, the racial division between the European and non-European work was to be more permanently institutionalized. The unifying "union" structure that had held together the white and black work was disbanded. First, in 1960 the predominantly white work was formed into what was called "Group I" (made up of three conferences), while the black work was formed into "Group II" (made up of nine fields). In 1965, these groupings returned to more traditional names, with Group I dissolved in favour of the South African Union (caring for the white, coloured and Indian work) and Group II becoming the Southern Union (administering the black work).

These distinctions were more racially than culturally based, as can be easily shown. For instance, frustrated Afrikaners during this period tried to advocate their own Conference. The larger church body refused to allow a Conference for a separate language group, and a small number of ministers and members broke away to form their own conference in the 1960s, a movement that demised in a few years (Pantalone 1998). In some cases, racial reasons proved inadequate to maintain separate conferences, and during the 1970s the separate administrative structures for coloured and Indian members in the then-Transvaal and Orange Free State/Natal regions were disbanded. These members and churches merged with the "white" Transvaal and Oranje-Natal conferences. However, larger numbers allowed the Good Hope Conference, with its focus on coloureds in the Cape, to keep functioning until the early 1990s.

During the 1980s the global church came under increasing pressure, both from within and without, to take a stand against racism, and particularly against apartheid. In 1981, the General Conference Commission on Church Unity came back with recommendations that included fairly strong suggestions on the situation in South Africa.

Finally, in 1985, on the eve of the General Conference session in New Orleans, the President of the General Conference, Neil Wilson, released a long-overdue statement on racism: "The Seventh-day Adventist Church deplores all forms of racism, including the political policy of apartheid with its enforced segregation and legalized discrimination" (*Adventist Review*, November 14, 1985:2).

However, many remained unconvinced that the global church was paying enough attention to racism and oppressive policies in South Africa. A particularly telling critique was written by Roy Branson, entitled "Bleeding Silently—Adventists in South Africa" (*Spectrum,* December 1986). The pressure within the church continued to simmer, especially as the demise of apartheid seemed increasingly likely. On October 25, 1990, the General Conference Executive Committee appointed a commission on the church in South Africa. The Commission was asked to prepare a report "regarding what has been achieved in line with the recommendations of the May 1981 General Conference Commission on Church Unity," and

to determine "what the Church needs to do to meet the multi-racial needs of the Church within the biblical framework of church unity and equality of all members" (Restructuring Report 2004:1).

However, many in Adventism remained unconvinced that the church had dealt with the situation in South Africa. In 1991, two local black members, Nkosi and Magethi, put out a publication provocatively titled, *God or Apartheid?* How can the church remain silent, they argued, when heaven's subjects are being mauled and assaulted by vicious policies of an evil system of government?

In October 1991 the General Conference Executive Committee, meeting as an Annual Council in Perth, Australia, received and adopted the report and recommendations of the Commission on the Church in South Africa. The recommendations called for merger of the two union entities functioning in South Africa and further mergers of local conferences and fields, with boundaries drawn geographically. Prior to the end of 1991, the two unions met at Helderberg College in South Africa, and in a narrow vote agreed to merge into one Union Conference directly attached to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.[49]

Since 1992 the question of mergers has been considered at local conference and mission levels. In 1994, The Kwazulu-Natal-Free State Conference became a merged conference of all the different racial groups in that area. Khonzwayo describes some of the white fears prior to the merger:

> There was a fear that the numbers of black Adventists of the then Natal Field were overwhelming and the financial resources would not be able to sustain the pressure [for instance a ratio of one black pastor to nine churches]…. There was also fear that the epoch post the merger of the organizations would be characterized by hostilities, chaos, anarchy, disorganization, instability and mayhem since the administrations would have fallen into the hands of the black people [in a spirit of vengeance]…. Moreover, most whites generally in South Africa perceived black people as untrustworthy because they saw them as lacking experience and expertise of managing any resources…. Some thought the new administration would simply impose a black and African pastor over a predominantly white English or Afrikaans speaking congregation. Further that white pastors would be thrown on to the deep end by being allocated black churches in black townships and rural areas… They felt that the merger cheated them by bringing them into a situation in which they have to share hard-worked-for resources (Khonzwayo 2001:12-13).

However, many of these fears never materialized, although difficulties were encountered, such as dealing with different perceptions of nepotism. In a survey conducted just prior to 2001, an independent panel polled 32 churches regarding the success of the merger. Sixty-six percent said that the merger was a

[49] Unions, church administrative structures for countries, normally fall under "Divisions" which represent larger geographical areas. However, it was felt that because of the special situation in South Africa, that the South African Union Conference should be directly connected to the highest governing body of the church—the General Conference.

success, 11 percent indicated certain reservations, 7 percent were undecided, 9 percent said they did not know and 7 percent did not respond (Khonzwayo 2001:21).

Between 1994 and 1996, the conferences in the Cape each held separate constituency meetings to determine if they could unite in a merged conference. Concerns about the financial viability of the new unified structure caused enough loss of confidence in the Cape Conference (historically white) for them to narrowly miss the 75 percent mandate needed for a disbanding and merger.[50] The Good Hope Conference (historically coloured) and the Southern Conference (historically black) decided to go ahead and merge as the Southern Hope Conference. The issue was once again brought to the Cape Conference at its next constituency meeting in 1998, and a low-key approach to merger in the form of "continued discussions" was adopted.

Exploratory talks were held between the Trans Oranje Conference (black) and the Transvaal Conference. As a result, there was a merging of their community service departments into one unified structure in a process of "testing the waters." However, the problem of funds distribution became a source of friction. The challenge related to existing infrastructure of which the previously white and coloured conference had owned many large facilities, while the black conference mainly had "soup kitchens." In the view of the black leadership, the mutual collecting of funds and then disbursing them to largely-white retirement homes and projects "was a cooperative arrangement that seemed to enrich the rich and impoverish the poor" (Khonjwayo 2001:4). The challenge of distribution of scarce resources while still maintaining current facilities eventually caused a split between the two conferences, and the merged community services department was disbanded. The merger faced two challenges, according to Khonjwayo. There was white reluctance to redistribute resources and black demands in the spirit of "uhuru."[51]

After this, attempts to convince the historically white and coloured Transvaal Conference to merge with the regional black conference were unsuccessful, with it being voted down on several consecutive occasions.

In the meantime, both the Transvaal Conference and Cape Conference were putting pressure on the Southern Africa Union to reconsider the use of tithe distribution.[52] This led to a discussion of the possible

[50] In contrast, the coloured Good Hope Conference voted 94 percent in favour of the merger and the black Southern Hope Conference voted 97 percent in favour of the merger.

[51] Khonjwayo identifies "uhuru" as "vociferous and uncompromising political conduct and harsh demands." He states "the country and church [cannot] survive in an antagonistic atmosphere that projects people of European descent as "enemies that took our land" and therefore must return it without expecting any payment in exchange" (Khonzwayo 2001:5).

[52] Tithe is returned to a local church by members and the entire amount is forwarded by the church to the Conference office in order to pay minister's salaries and care of evangelism and administrative expenses. Of this

re-organization of the Union in order to achieve greater operational efficiencies in the use of resources and the deployment of personnel. The leaders of the Union saw in this a remarkable opportunity to begin a restructuring process that would eliminate historically racial and separate conferences. In 2000, the Southern Africa Union Constituency received and adopted a recommendation from the Executive Committee giving the incoming administration and Executive Committee a mandate "to consider an overall restructuring of the Union, its organizations and institutions" (Restructuring Report 2004:1). However, events were to move very slowly, and no substantial change was achieved through this mandate.

The continued challenge of merging the conferences caused the General Conference Executive Committee of the church, at its Spring Meeting in April 2002, to issue an appeal for the remaining conferences to "take actions that will establish a unified administrative structure in each geographic territory" (Restructuring Report 2004:1).[53] This renewed emphasis on integration formed the backdrop to the Union Special Constituency Session in 2002 in which a model of restructuring was voted.[54] This model of merged conferences was voted down at the historically white Transvaal Conference constituency meeting, much to the frustration of the leaders of the Union. In the Cape, the historically white Cape Conference postponed its meetings, citing a lack of financial information from the Southern Hope Conference.

Amid growing frustration from pro-integrationist forces (mainly black), the Union held a special business session on 14 March 2004 to discuss restructuring and merger. After much deliberation, the following recommendations were taken:

> Whereas the SAU Constituency mandated a restructuring process in order to:
>
> a. achieve and display the biblical imperative for unity
>
> b. achieve cost efficiency through the rationalization of overlapping or duplicated structures; and
>
> Whereas the Trans Oranje Conference and Southern Hope Conferences voted to dissolve their respective conferences at the appropriate time in order to join in the new structures; and

---

amount, 37.5 percent of the tithe is remitted to the Union for both country and worldwide missionary and administrative expenses. Dissatisfaction occurred over the amount of tithe to send to the higher administrative offices, since Conferences were struggling to pay the ministers in local churches.

[53] The public report of this decision can be found at http://news.adventist.org/data/2002/03/1019153501/index.html.en

[54] This model was called a "Revised Traditional Model," and was basically a merger model along the traditional lines of the Seventh-day Adventist organizations worldwide. Thus "restructuring" became synonymous with merger.

Recognising with regret that the Transvaal Conference voted against dissolving its conference in order to join a new conference and the Cape Conference postponed its session, due to lack of financial information from its merger partner;

It is recommended that:

1. The Constituency of the SAU reaffirm its commitment to the restructuring process of the SAU for cost efficiency and unity.

2. The Cape Conference and the Transvaal Conference be granted a final opportunity to dissolve their conferences and move in harmony with the actions of the November 2002 SAU Session, which must be taken at their regular sessions in 2004.

3. As soon as possible following actions to merge, the SAU shall call a constituency meeting of the new organizations to adopt a constitution after the model contained in the GC Working Policy and to elect the conference officers and perform other relevant actions as provided in policy.

4. The Transvaal Conference and Cape Conference are invited to raise, prior to their constituency sessions in 2004, for the attention of the union and the division, any concerns relative to the merger. The union and division shall arrange for a fair hearing of such concerns prior to the constituency sessions in 2004. If, after these processes, a conference constituency chooses not to support the merger, such action shall be deemed as rebellion and the union shall proceed according to the General Conference *Working Policy* B 75 (Summarized from the Restructuring Report 2004).

These recommendations were put to a vote in which 130 voted in favour of the recommendations and 39 voted against them. In essence then, the merger of local conferences has now been mandated from the broader body, and conferences which choose not to merge will be removed from the sisterhood of Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The reaction against this statement in both the Cape Conference and Transvaal Conference was extremely negative resulting in Union and Division leaders visiting both constituencies to apologize for the published statement. It is likely that mergers will be accomplished but not without severe trauma among the historically white Conferences. The question remains whether unified structures will actually result in real unity and integration at local church levels. In fact, within the historically white Conferences, integration has already been happening at a remarkable pace since the early 1990s, particularly within English-speaking congregations.

5.3.3 Seventh-day Adventism and Mixed-Race Congregations

No written history of Seventh-day Adventist racially mixed congregations has been recorded. Evidence of the early existence of such congregations remains fragmentary and anecdotal at best. What is clear is that racially mixed congregations existed in the early days of apartheid. Some of those in the Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist congregation remember attending racially mixed churches such as the Hugo Street Church in Elsiesriver (see chapter eight). With political changes impacting on the congregation, the church was moved to Goodwood and became an all-white church. Sometimes servants of white members attended white churches, and there was never an official policy of exclusion in the Seventh-day Adventist

Church in South Africa. However, the churches often practised exclusion and separation even if they did not hold to it as an official belief.

The following anecdotal example serves to reinforce this. Modisane, a black writer who helped create the *Drum* magazine, visited fifteen white Johannesburg churches from various denominations in 1956. One of the churches he visited was an English-speaking Seventh-day Adventist church. He records his impressions as follows:

> On Saturday morning in my newly pressed suit we went to the Seventh-day Adventist church which was not very difficult to steal myself into through a side entrance… I threw my antenna to feel out the slightest hostility to my presence, but it was like trying to feel for something in a vacuum. There was no contact. Then I felt the warm breath on the back of my ear, the voice whispered: 'This is a white church, there's a Seventh-day Adventist church for natives in Sophiatown.'
>
> 'Yes I know,' I said, brushing his objections aside, 'but I want to worship here.'
>
> I leaned forward out of the reach of the whispering voice which was breathing warm into my ear, and peered into my Bible. After a few more attempts which were ignored he rose from his seat and walked over the main entrance to return with one of the elders who was a member of the welcoming committee; there were no polite insinuations in his voice. *I was not wanted*" (Modisane as quoted in Pantalone 1996:148-149).

Modisane was discreetly but forcibly escorted out of the church. The next week, his associate, Can Temba, revisited the church, with an even more violent reaction.

> "Can whistled his way to the main entrance and into the hands of a hostile, enormous Christian who with two others halloed for help and manhandled the black intruder into a waiting car; and as they were forcing him into it his head knocked against the top of the car causing a flow of blood. He was taken to the Marshall Square Police Station and charged with trespassing and allowed out on bail" (ibid.:149).

Obviously, such violent evictions were not common, but many Seventh-day Adventists attest to the common assumption during the apartheid era that "there were white churches for white people, coloured churches for coloureds, Indian churches for Indians and black churches for blacks." During the height of the apartheid era, this division in the SDA church in South Africa seems to have been complete, with no truly multicultural churches in existence.

In the late eighties and early nineties, this picture of exclusion was to begin changing. The first major changes in the racial profile of the local SDA congregation occurred, not as a result of ecclesiastical policy or even of government changes, but with shifting demographics. The immigration of both refugees and well-educated blacks from countries to the north created a new displaced population group in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Attempts by these foreign blacks to attend local black churches met with

difficulties both because of prejudice against foreigners and because of language problems, since local black languages were generally quite different from the languages to the north. As a result, these blacks naturally started attending English-speaking congregations where they at least understood the *lingua franca* and could meaningfully participate. Since some of these blacks had also attended predominantly white "western" congregations elsewhere in the world, many of them felt at home in the culture and worship style of the white churches.

These blacks came as a result of job and education opportunities in the opening South African market and educational system. Some of these "sophisticated" and less "politically aggressive blacks" were welcomed in the local congregations, while others sat frustrated in the pews, not really feeling like they were an integral part of the congregational life (see chapter seven). However, as their numbers grew, so did their influence, and many of the educated blacks moved into influential board positions in local congregations.

Initially, the impact was felt mostly in the urban centres. Johannesburg Central was the first large SDA church in South Africa to move from being exclusively white to becoming first predominantly, and finally almost exclusively, black. Partly, this was because of the increase in violence and crime in the city causing many whites to retreat to their suburban enclaves. To a certain extent, it was also the result of prejudice as some whites left to start their own congregations (see Chapter Six).

As immigrant black members swelled in local English-speaking congregations, they attracted local black professionals into the congregation. Some congregations, such as Mowbray Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cape Town, were revitalized by the introduction of black members. Mowbray had been nearing extinction as their once-strong church had declined to a small group of mainly retired and somewhat inactive elderly members. Across the street, on the campus of the University of Cape Town, a strong black student group met weekly and included both foreign and national students. Some of the students started attending the Mowbray church, and the idea to integrate the two groups was born. What could have been a very paternalistic arrangement was somewhat modified by well-educated black lecturers who became elders in the newly integrated congregation. As a result, the once-dying church is now largely filled on Sabbath mornings, although it too has become a predominantly black church.

Most SDA English-speaking churches in the urban areas of South Africa are undergoing transition to heterogeneity. In the Cape Conference it was estimated that 18 of the 21 English-speaking, 9 of the 14 bilingual, and 5 of the 17 Afrikaans-speaking churches were racially mixed. In the Transvaal Conference, all or nearly all English-speaking churches were racially mixed, with 52 of the 93 churches overall in the

conference being estimated to be racially mixed. The KwaZulu Natal Freestate Conference estimated that 18 of their 41 English-speaking or bilingual churches were racially mixed.[55]

The growing multicultural nature of the local church in South Africa, as well as the rapid integration at almost every level of South African society, has been a cause for concern among both administrators and local church pastors. At the Union restructuring committees of 2001 and 2002, the need for a systematic plan to help churches through racial transition was suggested, but no plan was ever implemented. In 2002, a special workers' meeting was called in which the topic of unity amidst diversity was the main focus. However, for various reasons, these meetings did not result in much practical change at the local congregation level.

Minority groups are particularly concerned that their needs will be overlooked in the new democratic South Africa. As Foster points out, the challenge with a democracy is that the majority rules, even if this is at the expense of the minority.[56] A central challenge of churches undergoing transition is how to maintain evangelistic growth among all people groups. Failure to do so may eventually result in the loss of almost all English-speaking white church members.

This kind of situation has already occurred in a parallel situation in England, where immigrant, largely Afro-Caribbean Seventh-day Adventists joined the churches in large numbers after an immigration wave in the 1950s. As immigrants found welcoming Adventist congregations to join, they invited their friends who were not Adventists, and rapid membership growth resulted.[57] However, the growing immigrant population became unhappy with the paternalistic and culturally insensitive control exerted over them by the white leadership. After much agitated discussion, the General Conference president and vice-president personally intervened in the situation to broker what came to be called the "Pierson Package" (named after the General Conference president). It directed the church in Britain to adopt integrated leadership at conference and union levels and to place calls for experienced black pastors.

In 1979 several black pastors were called from the Caribbean. These pastors quickly rose in leadership and one of them, Cecil Perry, currently serves as the British Union president. Currently the presidents of all three conferences are black (although other administrative leadership still has a high white

[55] As reported by the secretaries to the presidents of the respective conferences in November 2004.
[56] Foster states: "Almost every racially and culturally diverse congregation I have visited has discovered that majority-minority voting strategies only perpetuate the experience of cultural margination of any numerically minority cultural or racial group…. In a variety of ways these congregations are turning to decision-making strategies that require the participation and contribution of all people and groups. Decisions are built instead of made" (Foster 1996:18).
[57] The Adventist church in Great Britain doubled in size between 1950 and 1970 (Johnson, *Adventist Review*, June 16 2001:6).

representation). At the local congregational level, less than 25 percent of the membership is white, even though in the surrounding population whites number over 90 percent of the general population. In London, only three hundred "English English" are active in the 10,000 strong membership in that area.[58] When William G. Johnsson met with a group of white pastors in the South England Conference, they expressed their hurt and frustration with what was happening with the white work:

> They emphasized that at the personal level Black and White pastors and members get along fine. However, the cultural differences expressed in worship make it difficult for the White pastors to bring new White people into the church. The White work is dying before their eyes, and they feel sad and frustrated. And they have to deal with the criticism, actual or implied, that if they only worked harder they would enjoy the same success as the Black pastors have.[59]

White membership has declined from about 6500 in 1953 to less than 3000 by the turn of the millennium (John Arthur in *Spectrum* August 12, 2002). In response to this decline, in 2000, a decision was made at the North and South England Conferences to create two new positions in each conference with special responsibility to co-ordinate efforts to reach the indigenous people. There was a large outcry among some of the members that this was a return to a racist past (see William Ackah's "Killing the Spirit" in *Adventist Today* September/October 2000).

Looking over their shoulders at England, many white (and some coloured) Adventists in South Africa fear the loss of their cultural space as well as the decline and elimination of minority church growth. It seems that all Seventh-day Adventists desire unity, but there is a fear that current definitions of unity seem to come at the cost of minority groups themselves.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This overview has traced historically the history of the SDA church with regard to race relations. The historical narratives of the Seventh-day Adventist church in both the United States and South Africa suggest that there is a growing trend toward heterogeneity, but real challenges remain when it comes to finding unity in diversity. This broader narrative has had a profound impact on the smaller narratives of the local congregations. They, too, face the same struggle to find a workable praxis as they undergo rapid and decisive change.

[58] Most churches have only ten or less whites attending, with one mid-size church still having a majority of whites (although even this is changing), according to William G. Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review* (ibid.).
[59] Johnsson gives a much fuller explanation of this in his article (ibid.)

CHAPTER SIX: CASE STUDY OF THE SANDTON SDA CHURCH

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Persuasive sociological and theological factors are pushing many homogeneous faith communities in South Africa toward heterogeneity. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception to this trend. Particularly affected are previously all-white, English-speaking congregations. The Sandton Seventh-day Adventist Church, one such congregation, was chosen as a case study in the effects of this kind of transition.

Sandton is a vibrant and growing multicultural church in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Approximately two hundred people attend each Sabbath (Saturday), although only about half are church members. According to an October 2001 congregational survey, the congregation is made up of the following racial groupings: 45 percent Black, 37 percent White, 14 percent Coloured, 4 percent Asian.[60] However, until five years ago, Sandton was known as a white English-speaking congregation appealing to young white professionals.

Sandton was chosen for this research project because it represents many dynamics of change in a church undergoing racial and cultural transition. Sandton has a wide variety of nationalities, classes, races and language groups attending its services. It also has two services, both of which are racially mixed. Until a decade ago, Sandton was predominantly and almost exclusively white. Since then, racial change has significantly and profoundly impacted on this church, and the church now has a black majority in attendance as well as an international black pastor as its leader.
Subsequent findings from return visits in 2002 and 2003 will be briefly mentioned as part of this case study.

6.1 HISTORY

Sandton formed as a church plant at a time when the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa was just beginning to deal with racial challenges. At the first organizational meeting in 1983, thirty-five people attended. They were all white, and many came from the Johannesburg Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Two major reasons for this move to a new church were stated in an interview with one of the founders: (a) a fear that Johannesburg Central would become "black" (later realised); and (b) the distance they had to travel to get to the Johannesburg Central Church (Interview 1:2 16/10/01). From inception, some Sandton leaders were motivated by desire for racial homogeneity.

> During the discussions it was stressed that in order for a new fledgling congregation to succeed it would be imperative that a nucleus of members be prepared to resign from their existing

[60] The survey was handed out to 170 congregational attendees, excluding some children and some visitors who did not fill in the survey. Of the surveys returned, 159 proved usable.

> congregations and make an irrevocable commitment to the new congregation (*History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Congregation at Sandton* prepared by Louis van Aswegen 1992).

Twenty-nine people embraced these commitments, and on 7th January 1984, the first service of the congregation was held in the hired facility of the Assembly of God Church in Morningside. Of the thirty-seven adults who attended, 20 were foundation members. By March of that year, the Sandton congregation was officially constituted as a fully-fledged congregation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This continued to be their home for the next three and a half years until their move to Wendywood High School in April 1987. Louis van Aswegen became the leader of the group and there was strong lay leadership, although a nearby pastor, Dave Peckham, was assigned to assist the new group. This lay-driven, pastor-assisted initiative was to form part of the character of the church. Two older members in the church commented, "This is a self-run church with leadership coming from within the congregation itself. Our early pastors didn't stay for long" (Interview 3 17/10/01).

By this time, the congregation had swelled in membership and attendance and continued to build its reputation and to recruit members and visitors throughout these years. In October 1987, the congregation decided to embark on the next stage of its church planting process. Through their pastor, Mannie Harcombe, they purchased ground in Sunninghill on which to build a church building. Plans were begun in earnest for consolidating and growing the building fund, and it appears that much of the tenor of this period was one of enthusiasm and determination.

As has been pointed out, most pastors who had served the church during this time did not stay for long. Mannie Harcombe was replaced by Allan Hart (1988) after just one year. He in turn gave way a year later to A. Van Rensburg (1989), who left at the end of that year. After having had their pastors change three times in three years, the church was eventually left without a pastor. It was decided that it would be better to be without a pastor for a year until a suitable one could be found. For most of that year (1990), the elders ran the church, especially through the leadership of Louis van Aswegen, Dennis Baird and Pastor Willy Grobler.

By the end of 1990, the church happily accepted a pastor who was to leave an indelible imprint upon the church. In fact, in many ways the church still lives under the shadow of his influence. Pastor Ian Hartley, a pastor with a vision and passion for growing a contemporary church, was called to the Sandton congregation. He immediately struck a rapport with several of the key leaders in the congregation, and under his leadership the congregation quickly stabilised itself and began to develop its own unique identity.

In November 1991, Sandton moved into a new church hall (the first phase of the building project). The average attendance was now about one hundred adults. The church now moved from its initial phase of growth to one of consolidation and identity development. At this time, there was no hint of any real colour change in the Sandton Church. The church was successfully "planted" as white, affluent, growing and dynamic.

Ian Hartley focused on turning Sandton into an evangelistic centre for secular and professional people. He started to revise traditional church structures. Gradually he eliminated the nominating committee, replacing it with a flexible committee that ran the church. He became known for his grace-centred and, at times, radical theology. His innovative and non-traditional approach to leadership appealed to many young professionals and others dissatisfied with traditional approaches to difficult questions. He began to see the need for a service that would cater to these new, and largely younger, members. As a result, a second service was begun, from its inception more informal, contemporary and youth-focused. The young white professionals quickly gravitated to the second service, and it appealed to other young adults from surrounding churches.

At this time (the early 1990s), the first blacks arrived at Sandton. They were mostly poor immigrants from Malawi working nearby, and came to Sandton because of proximity. They understood little English and did not participate much in services. Other immigrants followed, and a gradual and increasing sprinkling of blacks became noticeable at church services. These were treated cordially, although it seems no attempt was made to specifically incorporate them into the church.

In 1996, Ian Hartley decided to accept a position in Canada. His leaving created a vacuum and a loss of identity and focus. After a year, Bill Underwood, an American, accepted a call to lead the congregation.

By the time Bill Underwood arrived at the church, the congregation was on the precipice of change. The momentum of growth and identity development had been lost. The gradual influx of people of colour now gathered momentum at the very time when Sandton was undergoing leadership change.

The flexible approach of the early 1990s did not suit the leadership style of Bill Underwood. The lack of traditional structures made it difficult to bring continuity into a situation of rapid change. Bill Underwood began bringing the church into line with the more structured approach of the SDA church manual.

A number of key crises in the congregation involving marital, death and relationship issues meant that Bill Underwood's ministry focused on counselling (his natural forte and his area of professional

qualification), and supporting members of the congregation rather than on vision and change. Members began to develop differing perceptions on where the church should go.

Young white professionals now started leaving the church in large numbers. This left a dramatic vacuum in the second service. In a mutually overlapping movement, the young white exodus happened along with unprecedented growth from incoming black professionals. It is hard to determine to what extent the black people coming in helped to promote the exodus of young white professionals. Also, significantly, some of the whites from the second service started moving to the more conservative (but still mainly white) first service. Most denied racial basis and saw it as merely "maturing" tastes.

Racial change in the congregation has since been rapid. By 2001, at the time of the in-depth case study analysis, there were more people of colour than whites in the congregation. Subsequent visits in 2002 and 2003 have confirmed this trend. Whites now number less than 30 percent of all congregational attendees. With Bill Underwood's leaving in June 2002, the congregation struggled again with leadership and identity. Finally, a call was placed for the congregation's first full-time black pastor, Sam Davies, who arrived in May 2003 from England. The congregation is now perceived by most in church leadership and many Adventists in the area as a "mainly black" congregation. It appears that the chances of Sandton permanently remaining multicultural are small.

At the end of 2002, a particular crisis occurred in the congregation. Tensions started to rise within the nominating committee between mainly-white first service members and mainly-black second service members. Due to friction over money matters, the incoming treasurer refused to accept re-election to his position, and many felt that the tension was racially based. It is obvious that fear and distrust exist between the leaders of the two services. The first service members feel that the second service members are less conservative and do not "uphold Adventist standards." Second service members feel that the first service members are controlling and share more ownership of the church than they do.

Sandton's story demonstrates the complexity of transition in a dynamic racial environment. Interviews with congregation members showed plainly the importance of race in the developments at Sandton. In South Africa, where race often equals specific cultural values, the impact of racial change often outweighs all other social and leadership change in a congregation. This is particularly apparent as we examine the congregational identity.

6.2 IDENTITY

It is apparent that Sandton's identity has undergone a remarkable shift since its foundation. Initially an all-white lay-led congregation described as a "family church" by many founders, it transitioned into an

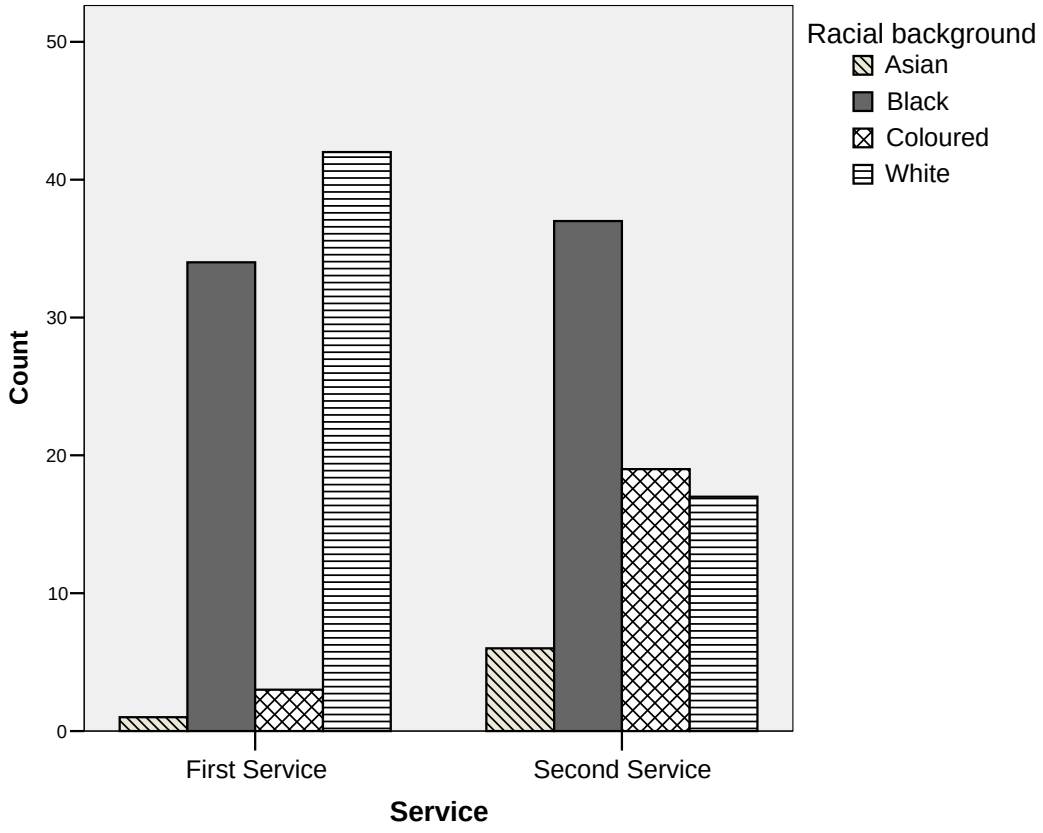
evangelistic centre focused on reaching secular people and backslidden Adventists. The most dramatic change, however, came in the late 1990s as the colour balance in the church changed and its identity metamorphosed.

As already noted, colour changes have not happened at an even rate in both services. There are two virtually separate congregations meeting in the same building. Although the board is central, the segregation between the two groups is marked. Only those who sit on the board are known to each other. At best, a dual identity has developed; at worst, a lack of any identity is the real issue.

6.2.1 Congregational Profile

A summary of the congregational survey results from 20 October, 2001 may be helpful in understanding the attendance at the two services according to racial identity.

Figure 5: Sandton Church: Service Participants



Obviously, the second service has experienced the greatest changes in identity. At its inception it was a well-attended, dynamically-driven program attracting and involving young white professionals. Over half of these have either left, moved to the first service or ceased to attend altogether.

Several factors seem to have led to this dramatic decline in attendance at the second service by this particular grouping. After several interviews with prominent young professionals who had stopped attending Sandton, I was able to identify the following perceived reasons for their non-attendance:

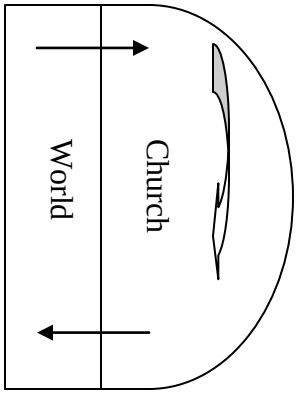
(a) Some felt that the preaching at Sandton did not meet their needs in that it lacked substantive Biblical content and was too "simplistic" (although this perception was not shared by all).
(b) Some felt that the worship style had changed and was not as professional and appealing as it had been in the past.
(c) Some felt that they had "matured" and preferred the worship style of the first service.
(d) Some left because of personal relationship problems.
(e) Most indicated that they missed the ministry of Ian Hartley.
(f) Most felt that they had "drifted" out of the church and had become unsure as to how important it was to be an Adventist.

The last reason is the most telling one. It seems that Ian Hartley's theology was predominantly focussed on making people more authentic Christians. In his book, *For God's Sake*, Ian consistently refers to the character of God as loving and gracious—a saving, rather than a condemning, God. His sermons seem to have challenged them to be better Christians rather than being better Adventists. As a result, many of those who attended the second service during Ian Hartley's time knew what it meant to be a Christian, but remained insecure about why they should be Adventists. They continued to come because they liked Ian's preaching, not because it was an Adventist church. This reason, when combined with a keen insight by one of the second service leaders, that Sandton tended to "collect people that were on their way out" helps us to understand why so many white young people left. They were already partly alienated from Adventism. When things got problematic, or when they couldn't make sense of the church, they simply took the final step out the door. They had moved full cycle from being non-Adventist, to being Christian to being Adventist, to being Christian, to being non-practicing Adventists.

In their sociological study of Seventh-day Adventists, Bull and Lockhart identified a typical pattern of membership processes that they called "the revolving door hypothesis" (1989:264). The theory is represented in the following diagram:

Figure 6: The Revolving Door

Entry Phrase:
Person becomes an Adventist
Is excited about their new faith
Has many non-SDA friends



Stabilization Phase:
2nd Generation. Person now lives in SDA community. Often a pastor or teacher. Has few non-SDA friends. Very accepting of the church.

Exit Phase:
3rd Generation. Person is often a professional and has contact with greater number of non-SDAs
More critical of the church. Exits.

From another perspective, the social ties outside of the church may have been much stronger than the social ties in the church. Thus the lack of cohesiveness, leadership and vision in the congregation may have provided little pull to keep semi-alienated young people in the church.[61]

The issue of congregational identity becomes even more difficult when one studies the black constituency. Many of them have struggled with the decision to move their membership to Sandton. The reasons for this are numerous. From the black perspective, they feel that not much has been done from the church's side to help transfer their membership. One black member tells how he waited for three years to get his membership transferred because "they did not know who I was." From the white perspective, getting the names transferred for black members is more difficult because they come from other conferences and often there is no reply when letters are sent. In addition, some blacks deliberately keep their membership at their previous churches for fear of criticism in joining a "white" (and therefore racist) Conference. Still others feel that their tithes need to go to their local churches so that their "home" (black) conference can afford to pay for more ministers (seeing that the white churches have a better minister-to-member ratio).

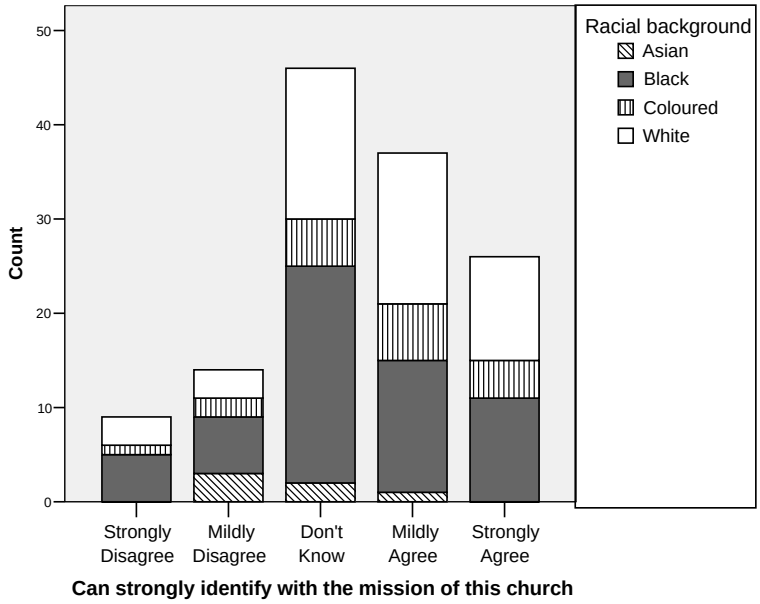
In summary, a sense of not being an integral part of the congregation and its mission has affected both blacks and whites. Alongside the white exodus, this lack of colour membership has resulted in a large number attending Sandton who have not identified with its character, program and mission. Nearly half of those filling out surveys were not members.[62] This was further emphasized by an attitudinal statement

[61] Pamela Popielarz and J. Miller McPherson call this the "niche edge effect" where "Members at the edge of an organization's niche will have higher turnover than members at the center of the organization's niche, as a result of the higher proportion of extraorganizational ties and their lower proportion of intraorganizational ties" (as quoted in Emerson 2000:148).

[62] 77 of the informants out of the 169 who returned usable surveys indicated that they were not members. This contrasts with other surveys the researcher conducted. For instance, in the Helderberg College Congregation, a congregation that routinely attracts visitors, only 24.6 percent of the informants of a survey in 1999 were not

in the survey. Informants were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 whether they could identify with the church's mission. This has been broken down into racial groupings for the sake of analysis.

Figure 7: Sandton Church: Identify with Mission of the Church

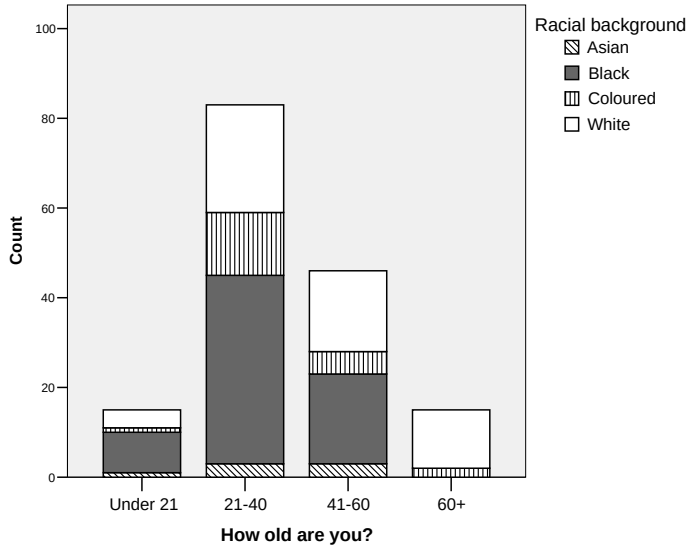


As this graph shows, many attending Sandton were unsure what the church's mission *was*. Only 18 percent of those surveyed ticked "I like the mission of this church."

Another important aspect of the identity at Sandton Church was the distinctive age composition. The graph below indicates the composition of those who attended the church according to age and racial groupings. (Young children were not represented in the survey.)

members. The Helderberg congregation is a predominantly homogeneous one and probably represents many non-transitional congregations in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

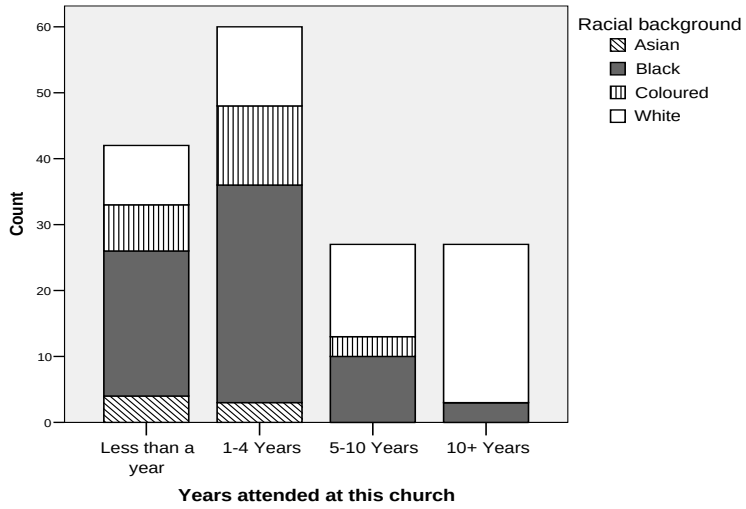
Figure 8: Sandton Church: Age



Thus Sandton represented (at the time) a highly youthful church with a high attendance of young professionals ("yuppies"). There were few retired members at Sandton, and of course no black retirees. However, this "age picture" was deceptive. Most board members were older whites. Only four out of the fifteen would be considered "yuppies." The church attendance was predominantly mixed and youthful, but control belonged to older white members. However, the second service worship program was directed largely by young professionals, mostly of colour.

The graph below illustrates the two groups that had developed at Sandton—the one a majority of newcomers of colour, and the other an older, established group of mainly whites.

Figure 9: Sandton Church: Years Attended

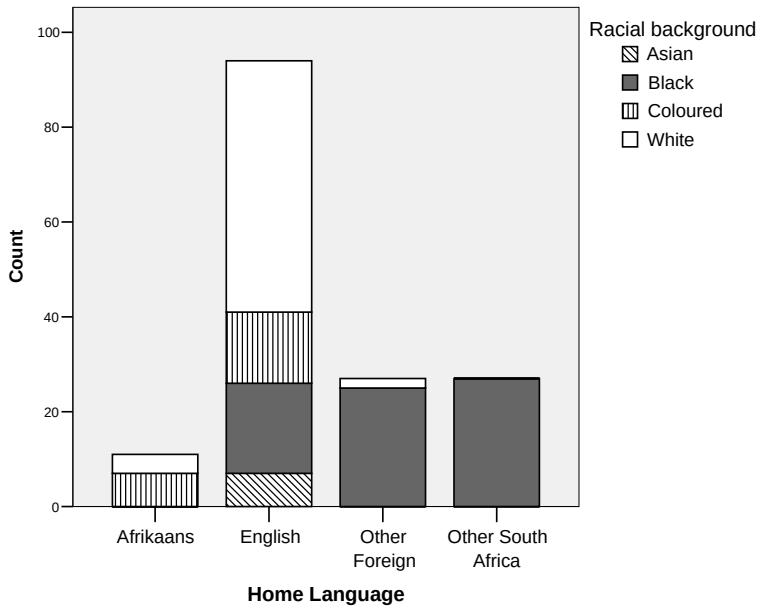


An obvious transition was rapidly taking place. White membership and attendance growth seemed to be declining, while people of colour were filling the gap.[63]

The congregational survey revealed that Sandton draws many of its congregants from the educated middle to upper classes. A profile of the congregation built up from the survey suggests that most of the congregation are employed (110 of the 159 respondents) and that they have at least an undergraduate degree or diploma (108 respondents). Some live in close vicinity to the church, while about half travel more than fifteen minutes to get from their homes to the church (77 of the respondents). Those who attend Sandton are mostly South African (116 respondents) with a mixed representation of those from outside the country ranging from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Portugal to other countries. However, of the blacks in the congregation, nearly half are of foreign descent (33 out of 70 who filled out the surveys, with some of the refugees not completing a survey due to language difficulties).

Language presents yet another interesting dynamic in the life of this mixed church. It shows that while Sandton's attendees' home language was formerly predominantly English, this picture is slowly beginning to change.

Figure 10: Sandton Church: Home Language



[63] Of the 49 who had only been there for less than a year, 29 now attended regularly. This suggests that the church will maintain its attendance growth among this group. Further, of those now attending regularly who had attended for less than a year, nineteen were black, three were coloured, two were Asian and four were white. Obviously the church is moving toward a loss of whites.

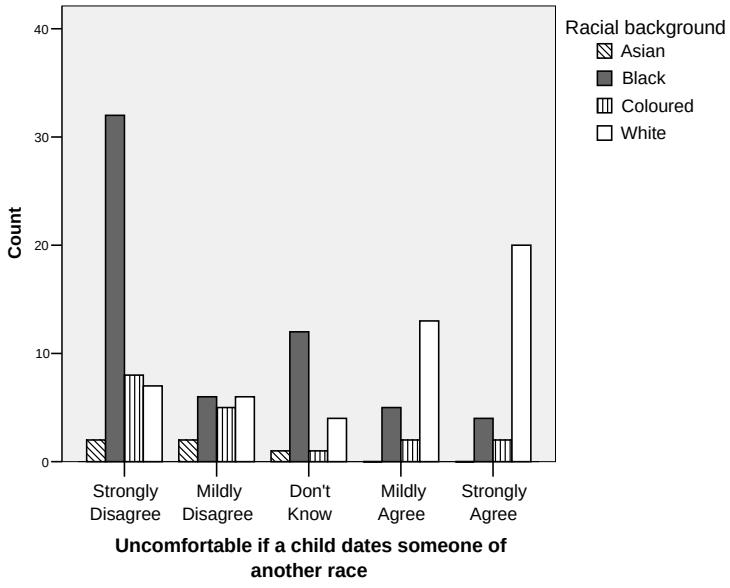
English remains the dominant language of the congregation. The predominant foreign languages spoken by the blacks are Chichewa and Tumbuka (both from Malawi), suggesting that African-based immigrants in the congregation are mainly limited to this particular grouping. The local black population comes predominantly from the Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking ethnic groups who form the bulk of the black attendance (15 indicated Zulu and 8 indicated Xhosa as their home language). However, there were also a significant number of blacks who indicated English as their home language, and these were mainly of international origin. The mixed bag of languages represented in the congregation suggests that the language identity of the congregation is becoming more ambiguous, although the use of English still predominates.

In summary, the congregational profile indicated that Sandton had a large and growing group of black young professionals and a diminishing, but controlling, group of older, middle-class whites. Despite initial transition movements, the majority of people of colour joining the congregation in recent years seemed to be local black South Africans.

*6.2.2 **Racial Identity Perspectives***

One of the key aspects of the study was racial identity. This was a controversial issue among many people in Sandton. This was evidenced by, among many things, a marked difference between the racial groupings' attitudes toward interracial dating. While this study does not deal with the ethical aspects, it is important to note the strong opinions elicited from the different racial groupings. The graph below indicates that the congregation still remained divided over the issue of how far integration should go.

Figure 11: Sandton Church: Discomfort with Interracial Dating



The graph clearly shows that most blacks within Sandton clearly supported interracial dating, while most whites were uncomfortable with it. This shows two different kinds of racial identity at operation in the congregation. The black racial identity was much more aggressively integrationist.

In terms of prejudicial attitudes in the congregation, there are both hopeful and negative signs. For instance, over 70 percent of the whites surveyed felt that blacks were too sensitive about racial issues, and a surprising 29 percent of blacks agreed with them. The combination of some blacks being sensitive to racial issues along with a majority of whites perceiving black sensitivity will inevitably result in prejudice and an inability to talk through "political" issues that have to do with race. The white tendency to avoid racial issues is further shown in the statement that was asked whether we spend too much time talking about race and racial issues. Of the whites, 38 percent agreed, compared to only 4 percent of the blacks.

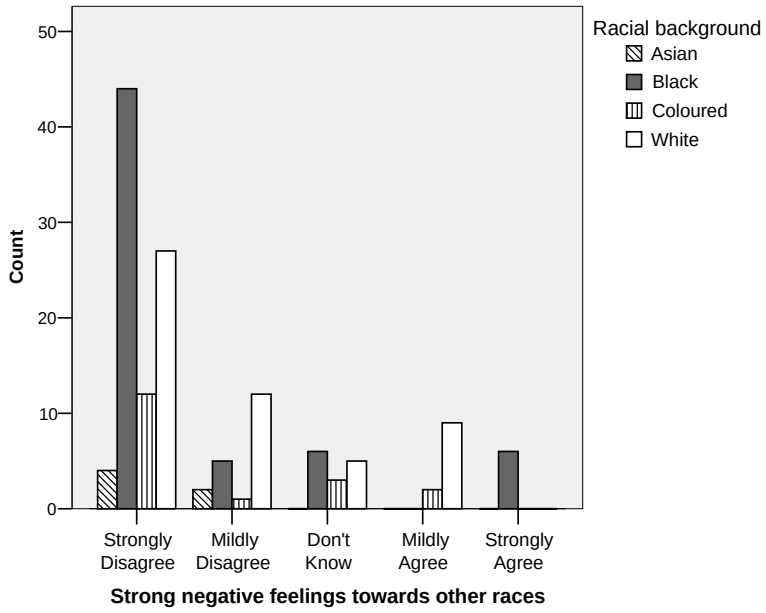
The statement that whites tend to be more racist than other racial groups received promising negative feedback, although there were a high number of neutral responses from the blacks.[64] A similar response was recorded for the statement that whites are more arrogant than other races,[65] suggesting an internal validity of the results, but more importantly, that whites are generally viewed fairly positively in the congregation. Another positive indication came from the statement "I find the smell of some other races offensive," with only 22 percent of the whites agreeing and just 3.5 percent of the blacks agreeing.

Aside from the problems with integration outside the church, the church itself is generally perceived as a warm and inclusive place. Over 60 percent of the blacks surveyed felt other races feel welcome at the church, and an amazing 84 percent of the whites felt this way. Only 22 percent of the blacks disagreed with the statement that the church's social events are inclusive of all cultures, while a mere 8 percent of the whites disagreed with it. Again, just 17 percent of the respondents felt that their inter-racial contact in the church had not been very positive, and only 2 percent of the whites said the same. Thus, an overall very positive inter-racial feeling and outlook exists at Sandton Church, even though real integration is still far off. The following graph gives an indication of this positive perception of other races in the Sandton church.

[64] Only 27 percent of the blacks surveyed felt that whites were more racist than other races, and this was not very different from the white response of 18 percent. However, 36 percent of the black respondents marked the "don't know" column.

[65] A slight reversal of the above results took place, with 23 percent of the whites agreeing with the statement that whites are more arrogant in comparison with 18 percent of the blacks. The "don't know" received 26 percent of black responses.

Figure 12: Sandton Church: Strong Negative Feelings Towards Other Races

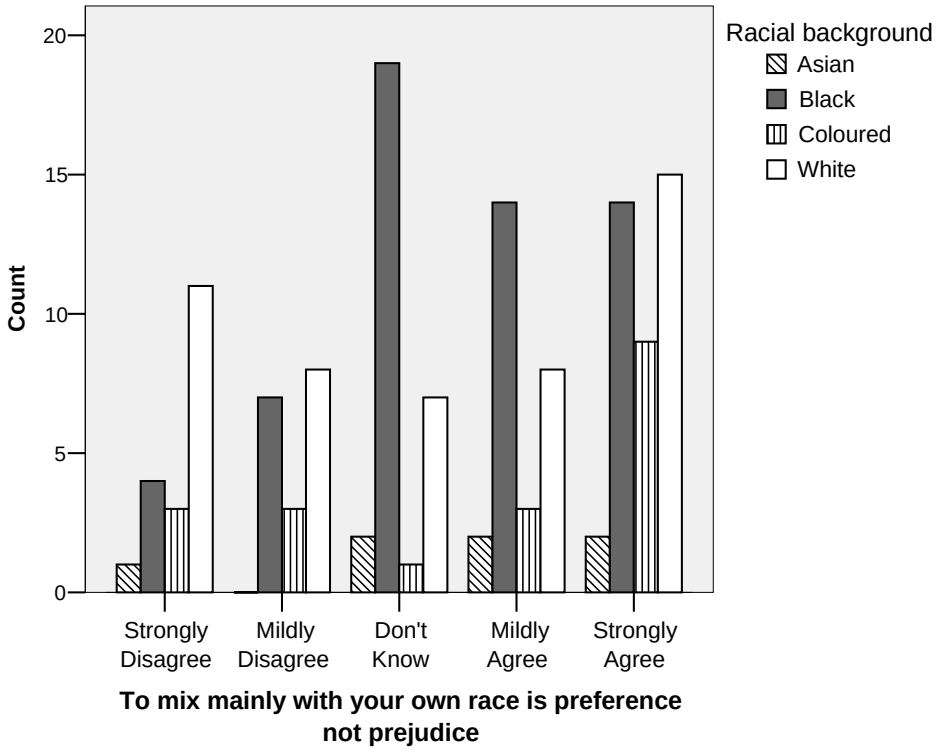


Thus, only a minority admit to having strong negative feelings toward other races (although some of those who feel this way are in key leadership positions). Still positive, but nevertheless uncomfortable (because it is higher than expected) is the fact that only 22 percent of the whites and 17 percent of the blacks feel that there is basic difference in intelligence between the races.

Thus, the racial identity of the congregation, although divided, shows a positive view of different races. However, it is a view of racial relations that aims for limited inclusion but social separation. This is also shown by the following graph, where the respondents were asked to rate the following statement: "It is perfectly natural for people to mix mainly with those of their own race, and this is preference and not prejudice."[66]

[66] The use of the "and" created a little confusion and this had to be clarified.

Figure 13: Sandton Church: Analysis of Preference versus Prejudice Attitudes



Once again, the racial dynamics are interesting. While the black and coloured response is fairly evenly spread out across the possible responses, the white response resoundingly favours agreement with the statement. The ethics of such a position can be argued, but for the purpose of this study, it is more important to note that such different perspectives could result in racial conflict over what is to be considered apartheid and what is not.

In summary, then, people at Sandton do not seem to perceive a great amount of obvious prejudice at their church, although individual interviews revealed strong attitudes in this regard. However, the issue of integration still remains ambiguous, with a number in the church being unsure how to relate to inter-racial dating and general mixing together socially. The whites probably over-estimate their inclusivity, while the blacks appear to be somewhat forgiving of racial smugness. A critical area seems to be the amount of talk about race that the different groups are willing to allow.

6.2.3 Worldview

Understanding the worldview of the congregation was more difficult. There was no consistent worldview evident that was characteristic of the congregation as a whole. Something of a worldview and ethos had developed for each service, but this was only in a vague and uncoordinated fashion. Under Ian Hartley, this had been different. He clearly espoused and projected a particular worldview that many in the

congregation adopted. However, Bill Underwood's approach appears to have been less definitive (which may have also allowed for greater pluralism in the second service and greater control by key leaders in the first).

While many aspects of the congregation's worldview(s) could be discussed, those particular aspects of their worldview(s) that related to racial issues will be focused upon. This was done through an attitudinal survey as well as interviews and a discussion with the church board.

Using Hopewell's model of congregational worldviews,[67] after analysis of the responses from the interviews, it appeared that those from the first service fell mainly into the canonic worldview, while those from the second service tended toward more of an empiric worldview. However, the second service shows mixed understandings, with some of the black members still holding to canonic worldviews, probably as a carryover from their more traditional backgrounds.

However, despite the canonical framework in the character of the first service, the humanistic element is still strongly emphasised. The answers to the church's problems, according to many in the congregation, lie in leadership, strategy, the warmth of the church service and more inclusion outside of the church service. One particularly noticeable black leader comes from a very different angle, however. He argues that the solution to the church's problems lies not in a different strategy but in a different *spirituality*, and that with time, love will triumph over prejudice. However, his views, though persuasive and convincing to those who will listen, still reflect a still, small voice in the congregation. Most of them are focussed on a more humanistic approach based on practical strategies to deal with the transitional crisis in the congregation.

6.3 PROCESS

The study of congregational "process" has to do with looking at the way the congregation accomplishes its goals (Carroll et al. 1990:81-86). Leadership often directs and channels congregational change, and the church board of Sandton needed to engage in a process of strategic planning. Accordingly, the board went through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the congregation. They saw the main strength of the congregation as being its human resources and leadership. Its music and worship style were thought an attractive asset and definite strength. The board members also felt that Sandton was perceived as "friendly." The multicultural mix was seen ambivalently as both an asset and a

[67] Hopewell identifies four categories that help to describe the rather ambiguous dimension of worldview in the congregation. Based on Northrop Frye's analysis of literature types, Hopewell applies these to the congregational setting. Canonic interpretations of life tend to rely on an authoritative world pattern, e.g. God's revealed word. Gnostic interpretations depend on an intuited process of a world that tends toward deep underlying unity. Charismatic interpretations expect the supernatural, while empiric interpretations rely on objectively verifiable data (Hopewell 1987:69).

weakness. The board saw the recent influx of visitors as an evangelistic opportunity. Thus, positively, Sandton was seen as a dynamic, growing, affluent, capable, well-organized and worship-driven church that attracted visitors and had evangelistic potential.

However, along with this optimistic portrayal of Sandton was a darker undercurrent. Sandton did not have many programs (evangelistic, social action, spiritual or social) running outside of the Sabbath morning church services. The few people that were actively involved in the congregation were close to "burnout." There was a lack of a full-time commitment from many of the congregants. And there was a sense that the leadership was so overloaded that many people were "falling through the gaps." There was also a sense that much more corporate evangelism was needed, that more pastoral leadership was desired (the pastor was seen as having too many responsibilities), and that segregation remained a reality in the congregation.

The worldview of Sandton appears to be a rainbow with a storm cloud behind it. The rainbow picture suggests growth, vibrancy and promise. The storm cloud suggests a burnt-out leadership struggling to cope with new cross-cultural demands and a feeling that the church is falling far short of its evangelistic ideal. In fact, this seemed to be the predominant concern. How can the church reach out to its constituency and win souls? Various ideas were presented, such as cell groups, planting new churches for diverse groups, and evangelism among professionals and friends as viable possibilities. All these were attempts to meet the perceived need to maintain the church's evangelistic thrust.

A look back at documentation drawn up previously when the church had done strategic planning gives further insight into this approach. The document clearly outlines evangelism (especially to secular people) as a key goal of the church. Instead of evangelism for secular people, however, the current church leadership and structure had ended up centred around organizing and running a professional program for a group of people that was becoming more and more unlike themselves. The very people they had hoped to reach were now unreachable, either through lack of time or because the congregation could no longer appeal to their needs. This seemed to be a crucial issue for the white leadership, who had seen the congregation undergo a transformation from its original purpose as an evangelistic centre for secular people to becoming a program-based church.[68]

Opportunities that the church board felt existed for them ranged from reaching their secular neighbours to social welfare opportunities that had been created by members of their congregation in a local orphanage

[68] Whether it had actually ever achieved this purpose remains debatable. However, the days of Ian Hartley were characterized by a number of backslidden (non-attending Seventh-day Adventists), semi-secular young (and not-so-young) people returning to the church, and therefore it seemed for a time to be achieving this objective.

and prison. The racial developments of the church as a whole and the restructuring taking place in the church's organizations were not generally seen as a threat, though some saw them as an opportunity.

The second phase of the board's discussion revolved around how the congregational praxis related to the Christian and Adventist heritage. Once again, the board felt keenly that although the congregation had kept many familiar aspects of Adventism in terms of doctrine and worship style, it needed to have a greater evangelistic thrust. The issue of spirituality also received some discussion, and the lack of spirituality was a cause of concern to some of the members.

Finally, in the third phase, both an ideal vision of the church and practical implementation of this vision were discussed. Here there was very little consensus. Most board members had their own ideas about how to meet challenges of the future. Some felt that having a growing church (especially among secular people) was the essential component. Others' ideal was just everyone harmoniously working together. Various suggested solutions, such as visitation, cell groups, spirituality or outreach as the emphases, emphasized that the leadership had no clear, unified vision. The church needed a clear direction in order to face the future successfully, but no one could agree what this direction should be. One member told the pastor, "You need to lead!" He responded with a wry smile, "I will, if you'll let me."

Despite difficulties, in some respects the church was prospering. There was a dynamic worship program attracting a full crowd every Sabbath. Pastor Bill Underwood (at that time) provided counselling and relationship help through his professional skills in this area, and there was a definite vibrancy in the congregation.

6.3.1 *Racial Transition*

Members of the congregation handled the crisis of racial transition in various ways. Older founding members discovered feelings of betrayal and old fears renewed. As one founder expressed, "I call this 'collective theft.' Whites build up and pay for a place, then blacks overrun it, and take it over. They come in busloads. Letters have been found that admonish blacks to target white churches..." (Interview 1:2 on 17/10/01).

Fear has obviously led to conspiratorial theories, the veracity of which cannot be ascertained. A feeling of "It's happening again… First we lost Central, now we're being overrun at Sandton" threatened. A number of them described feeling "swamped." They saw their congregation as a "revolving door" where visitors and blacks came in without responsibility and enjoyed the services. They felt the church was basically run by five families, and spoke painfully of losing those who had emigrated or left. Their world was disintegrating. "We used to be a close-knit group, and we did fun things together as a 'family

church'" (Interview 2:18/10/2001). This sentiment resulted in frequent discussions about starting cottage meetings for white families who wanted to leave. Perhaps for this reason, most whites avoided discussing the future of the church, and a general pessimism prevailed. They sensed that a black pastor would soon "pastor this mostly black church."[69] "In some services," one lamented, "we're outnumbered eight to one!" (Incidentally, statistics revealed that it had not yet reached these proportions.)

Those of colour in the congregation saw racial transition from a different perspective. A few were militant about change, seeing it as something that must come, "and if the whites want to leave, then they must leave." Most, however, wanted the church to continue being multiracial. In fact, a desire to join a multiracial church ranked highly among reasons such as proximity, worship program, and friends as a reason many blacks had chosen Sandton as their church.

A number of people of colour expressed a feeling of betrayal when white people left for racial reasons. There was an underlying fear that many whites were racist, and purposely avoided socialising and worshiping with blacks. One black member's daughter told her father that her white friend had said his father (who is also a member of the church) was a racist. She wanted to know if it was true. "What do you say," the black member asked, "to a question like that?"

Reasons given for the racial shift in the church vary. Some feel, as has been mentioned, that this is part of a plot to take over the church. Others tend to more naturally ascribe it to demographic shifts in their neighbourhoods. "People come because they live in the neighbourhood… people of colour moved into the area." Black members of the congregation who were interviewed admitted to a variety of reasons for moving to Sandton, including its nearness, its attractive worship program, existing friends who attended there, and a desire to be part of a multiracial church.

Most whites are, however, uneasy when it comes to discussing the future of the church. The church needs to grow in order to accommodate its growing population, but who will run the church, provide the funds and help it through its next stage of growth? Most blacks wonder why the white people are leaving, and ask, "Is there anything we can do?" Currently, racial transition appears to have happened fairly smoothly (within the congregation as a whole, not necessarily in leadership positions), but the uneasiness with which people discuss the future suggests that there are undercurrents of racial tension which are not obvious to the casual observer.

[69] This, in fact, came much sooner than anticipated. Once Bill Underwood left, it became apparent that hiring a black pastor from overseas would probably be the best "leadership fit" for this congregation.

One particular incident that occurred shows just how delicate the issue of race can be. A sermon by a well-liked black foreign speaker, close to June 16, mentioned the Soweto uprising and spoke against racism. This sparked a reaction among some of the white members who felt that politics should not be brought into the church. The matter eventually went to the church board meeting, where there was a fairly heated discussion. Eventually, it died out when the preacher, who attends the congregation regularly, told them that he would not be able to manage preaching appointments in the next quarter because of his full schedule. Since it appears that he was unaware of the board's discussion, the matter was able to be resolved without offence on either side. The older whites generally do not like political positions to be stated in a sermon, but some of the younger white people interviewed felt that there was no problem in dealing with political issues in the church and rejected their parent's sensitivity to politics in the pulpit. Discussing racial issues is one area where the congregation has not felt comfortable, and this has led to the "silence" on the subject within the public realms of its parish.

Apart from this incident, however, the issue of black preaching does not seem to have been a major stumbling block for the whites in the congregation. A number of the black preachers are very well-liked, and their sermons seem to be appreciated by all races and cultures. Most white members indicated that they have particularly enjoyed Errol Nemhardt's preaching. Most of the black and coloured members enjoy Bill Underwood's preaching and the variety of preachers, and they do not feel that it is necessary to have more black preachers just because they are becoming a "blacker" congregation.

Commitment through the process of transition varies. For the most part, among the core group of older whites there is a feeling of commitment to Sandton, even if, for some, it's an attitude of "let's grin and bear it." "We're committed to God and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," they say, but some will continue, "We're unhappy with Sandton Church." Most of the younger whites are much more ambivalent. Some indicate that they want to visit other churches more often. A few are clear that they will stick with Sandton, "even if it becomes black." Black and coloured people are enthusiastic (in general) in their endorsement of Sandton, but give various reasons as to why it has taken them so long to transfer their membership.

On how to involve blacks in the church structure, there is ambivalence. Some feel that this must inevitably happen, and that steps should be taken to ensure it. Others feel that the black people's lack of involvement might be a good thing because the sooner they get involved, the speedier the transition to a black congregation will be (which is seen negatively). There have been genuine attempts at nominating committees to increase the involvement of blacks in the church, which has been made difficult for three reasons. Firstly, as mentioned, the black people seem to have difficulty transferring their membership, which means they cannot hold office. Secondly, there is a feeling that they are sometimes not

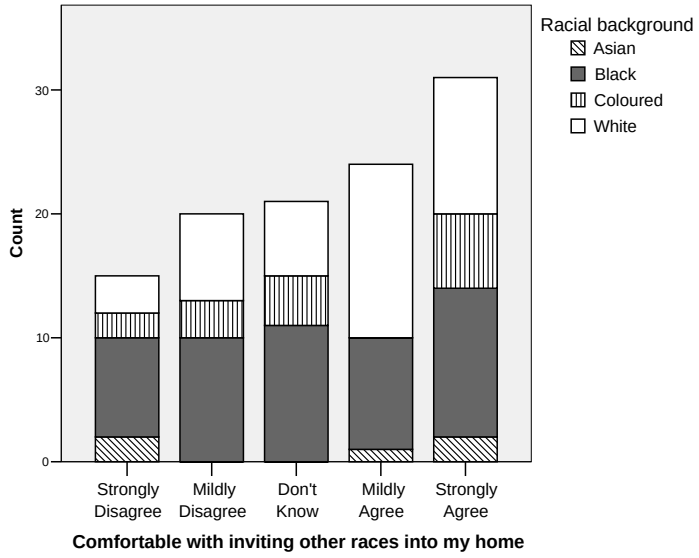
"dependable." Some blacks that are involved sometimes skip board meetings, don't turn up for duties, etc. Thirdly, there is sometimes a reluctance to get involved by people of colour (Venter 1994:129ff).

On the other side of the fence, there is a feeling by black members that among leadership there is a reluctance to involve them. The Malawian Bible study class noted that on that particular morning several prominent white visitors had been introduced in the early service, but not one of their Malawian visitors had been mentioned. They feel that although people in the congregation are friendly, they do not go out of their way to accommodate others. For instance, they wish that translation could be given to their friends, who do not understand English well enough to enjoy the sermon. They explained that in their home churches (in Malawi), visitors were "made a fuss of" and asked to stand up and be introduced. Anyone who did not understand the language would have someone sit by him or her to translate, or translation would be given simultaneously from the pulpit. This, of course, created a fair amount of noise in the congregation, but this was not seen as unduly impacting on the worship experience. Differing backgrounds have obviously created differing expectations for the worship service.

Some blacks feel that once they start attending a function, the whites no longer want to be part of it. An interesting example of race relations in the church occurred over the matter of fellowship lunches. Irma Hartley used to get everyone together for a "potluck" lunch. Not everyone came, but it was perceived as being a "fair group." However, when blacks started attending the lunches, some whites withdrew. It appears that there was a feeling among some of them that the blacks were coming in to "eat off them." However, it is also conceded that this might have just been an excuse because "lots of people at Sandton have their friends outside of the church and want to eat lunch with them." In other words, they weren't really interested in a fellowship lunch in the first place. The social mixing of the different races at Sandton has continued to remain a "thorn in the flesh" since that time.

Most people lament the lack of "mixing" at Sandton and recognise the need for greater social interaction. However, the reality of busy schedules and professional lifestyles seems to crowd out the time and desire to increase the social bonding at Sandton. This is particularly true when it comes to crossing racial comfort zones, especially among the white members. Most whites in the congregation, according to the survey, do not mix socially with people of other races. This is in spite of the fact that many of them claim to be comfortable in inviting people of other races into their homes:

Figure 14: Sandton Church: Comfortable with Inviting Other Races into My Home



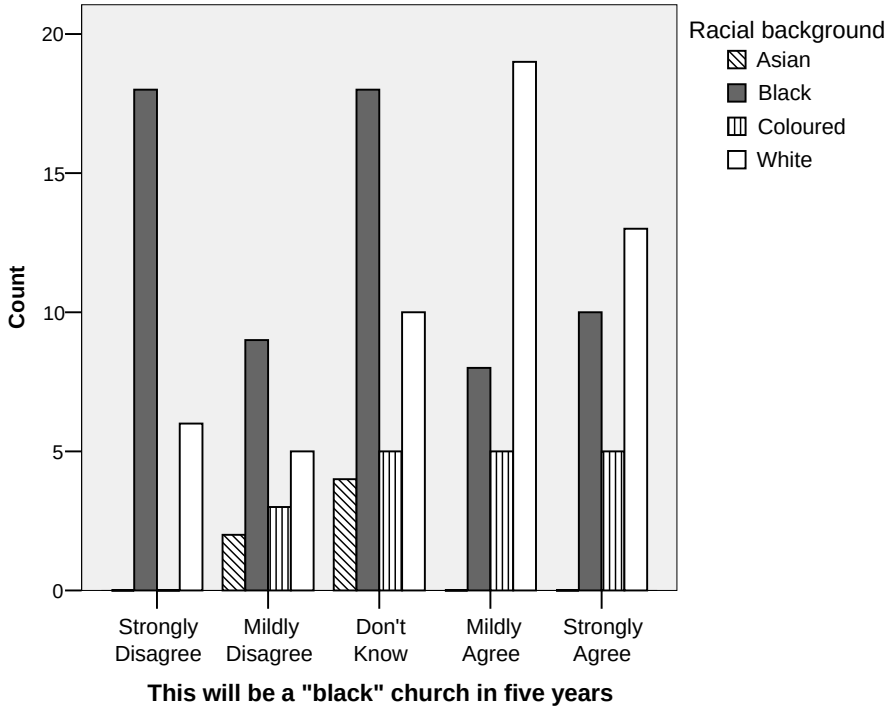
Even among those (of all colours) who do mix socially with those of other races, there is often a feeling of limited inclusion. It's almost as if an impenetrable barrier prevents those from another race from ever really becoming "part" of the other racial grouping. Perceptions of colour are never fully absent. One racially-mixed couple in the second service is dating (which has been difficult for a number in the congregation to accept), but most racial interaction remains fairly limited.

One particular area where racial tension seems to have existed is in the children's departments where, according to the Superintendent, racial transition seems to have happened "quite quickly," with the white children suddenly feeling overwhelmed. The youngest children seemed to struggle the most. A particular sore point was apparently the difficulty of understanding the accent used by the black teachers, as well as the use of antiquated words (like "retreat" instead of "run away"), and at times correction by the children of their teacher's grammar. The superintendent felt that some of the problems could have been overcome if the white children had been able to associate more with black children outside the Sabbath School classroom (such as in Pathfinders).

In spite of some of these challenges, the congregation is still seen as inclusive. As mentioned earlier, there is a positive feeling about the hospitable way in which Sandton deals with those of colour, and most people feel that Sandton is an accepting congregation with an attractive worship service.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the races occurs over the question of the future of the church. The following graph clearly shows a white "pessimism" about the church becoming black, contrasted with a black "optimism" that believes that the church will remain multiracial.

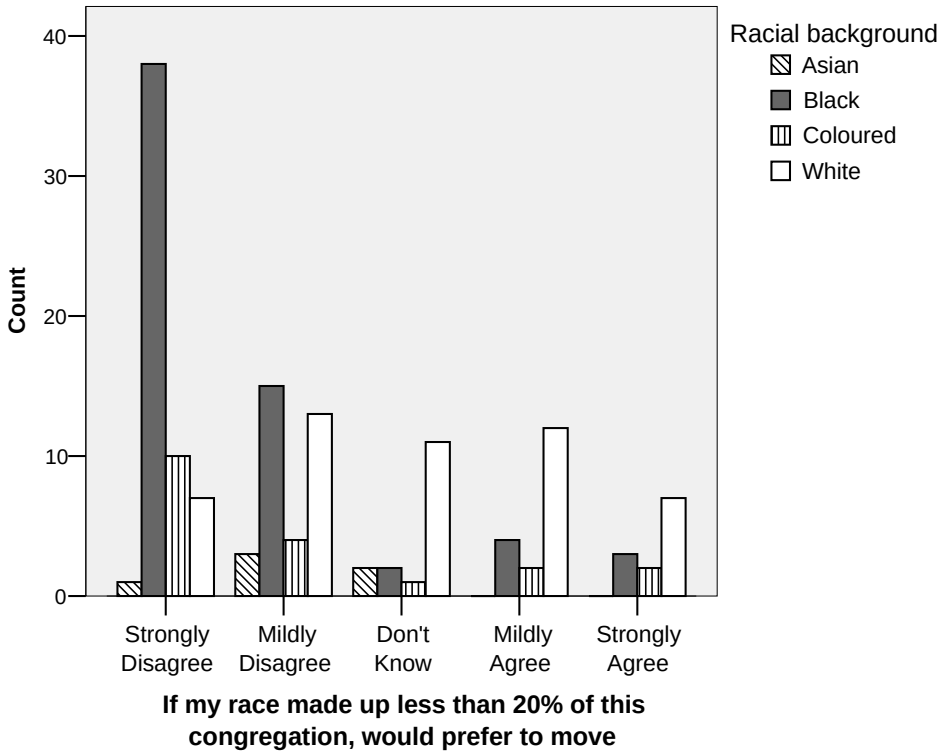
Figure 15: Sandton Church: This Will Be a "Black" Church in Five Years



While the overall response remains ambiguous, the differing racial responses to this statement are too clear to miss. Many black people, in principle, support integration, even when it is probably unlikely. And many white people have the natural fear of a minority—that they will in time be swamped and pushed out (even though they may leave of their own volition).

This kind of response is further seen when informants were asked to evaluate the following statement: "If my race made up less than 20 percent of this congregation, I would prefer to move." Once again, the black and coloured response was notably different to the white response:

Figure 16: Sandton Church: Would Prefer to Move if Less than 20 Percent of My Race



This overview of racial transition in Sandton suggests, once more, that there is a rainbow with a storm cloud behind it. On the one hand, there is a positive view of what is happening in Sandton Church, and a positive view of racial interaction. On the other hand, there are undercurrents, such as the lack of racial mixing, current racial tension, black sensitivity, white pessimism and differing racial growth rates that suggest that Sandton is going to struggle through its final phase of racial transition.

6.4 PROGRAM

In any church, programs form a central part of the church's way of nurturing the spirituality of its members as well as reaching out to the broader community. This is particularly true of Sandton, where much of the interaction between its members is structured and occurs as a result of the Sabbath morning program.

There are three main programs on Sabbath morning at Sandton. The first is a quiet and reverential service at 9:00 a.m. that attracts a slightly older membership. A pulpit, hymns and a single song leader distinguish this from the later service. Following the first service are Bible study classes which are mainly racially divided, with the exception of the children's divisions and some interspersed sprinklings of differing colours in a couple of the adult classes. Finally, a second service with a more contemporary

feel, a praise team and a testimony section follows. Quite often, it will run beyond its 1:00 p.m. finishing time.

The two services are quite different from one another, but have several notable elements in common. Firstly, there is a genuine attempt to create a warm, but meaningful song service. Secondly, the same preacher speaks at both services. Thirdly, both services incorporate announcements and special requests/testimonies into their worship format. Thus, "church talk" forms part of their worship. Finally, they share common leadership in a united church board. However, there are also significant differences. The first service runs more strictly according to time. Its membership is older and more conservative. There are less extemporaneous expressions and responses from the congregation. In many ways, the two services represent two distinct congregations meeting in the same building.

The programming of the service is seen in different ways by the different cultures. People of colour in the congregation place a high value on Sabbath afternoon programs. When asked "How much emphasis should the church place on each of the following tasks?" 83 percent of the coloureds, 72 percent of the blacks and 66 percent of the Asians said that Sabbath afternoon programs should receive more emphasis. This was compared to 50 percent of the whites who felt that way. When asked which task the church should focus on in the coming year, the highest rate response for people of colour were the Sabbath afternoon programs, while this was one of the lowest "must-do" priorities for white people.

In the interviews it became apparent why this difference with regard to the church's program existed. The black people in the congregation come from a church and cultural background that is highly communal. In their home churches, it is not uncommon for people to spend the whole day at church in a variety of church and social events. There is a feeling of "togetherness" and communal fellowship. In fact, as one of the interviewees stated, he would feel guilty if he stayed at home on a Sabbath afternoon. Many of the blacks in the congregation travel to other black Adventist congregations and spend the afternoon there. In contrast to this view, the whites in the congregation are more individualistic. They prefer to spend the afternoon with a small group of friends rather than sitting in a church program. They want the flexibility to do their own thing, rather than spending time conforming to a general church function.

This individualistic versus communal approach to life is also seen in how the different races approach evangelism. Most in the congregation are keen to do evangelism, but they see it as happening in different ways. All racial groups agree that there needs to be greater emphasis in the area of training to do personal witnessing (approximately 70 percent indicated this, evenly spread out among all racial groups). However, people of colour were more supportive of public evangelism than the whites (70 percent

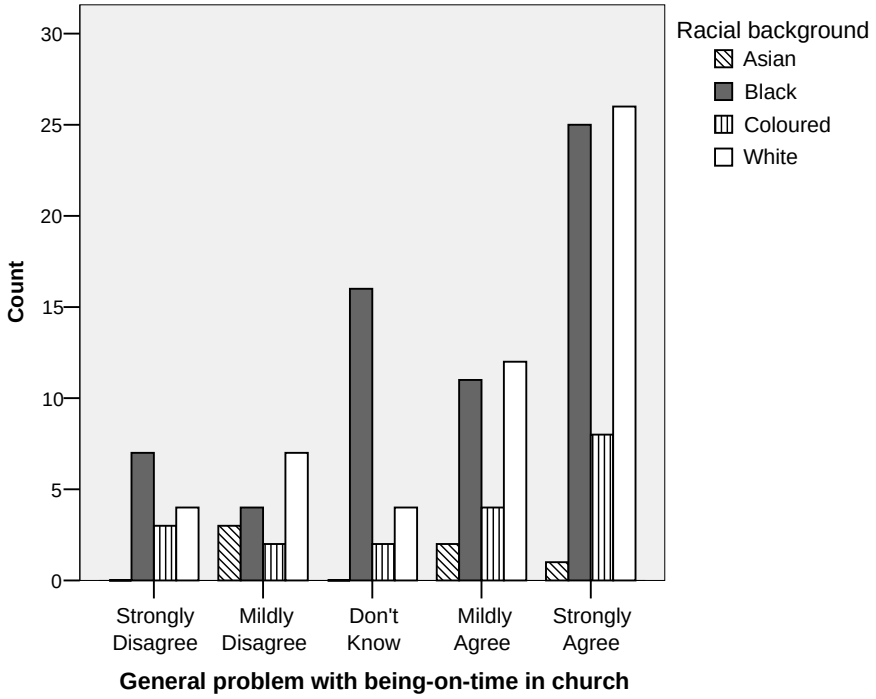
compared to 57 percent). When asked which task the church should focus on, public evangelism received the second highest rating from people of colour, and a minimal response from whites.

Another interesting dynamic was that white people in Sandton, in general, want less programming. On all the questions dealing with church programs, whites were much more likely to put "generally satisfied" (rather than "needs more emphasis") than were people of colour. In other words, there seems to a general feeling from people of colour that more programs need to be put into place if the church is going to be successful, whereas about half of the white respondents feel that no more programming is necessary.

This may suggest an underlying orientation that differs markedly between the races. Black and coloured members of the congregation look for a communal togetherness in a common program. White members prefer structures that are individualistic and allow for flexibility. Many white members prefer a small group of friends as opposed to a larger group of unknown faces at a big program.

One area where a culturally defined difference might have been expected was with regard to time. When asked to respond to the statement that "there is a general problem with being on time in the church," the following response was surprising:

Figure 17: Sandton Church: General Problem Being On Time in This Church



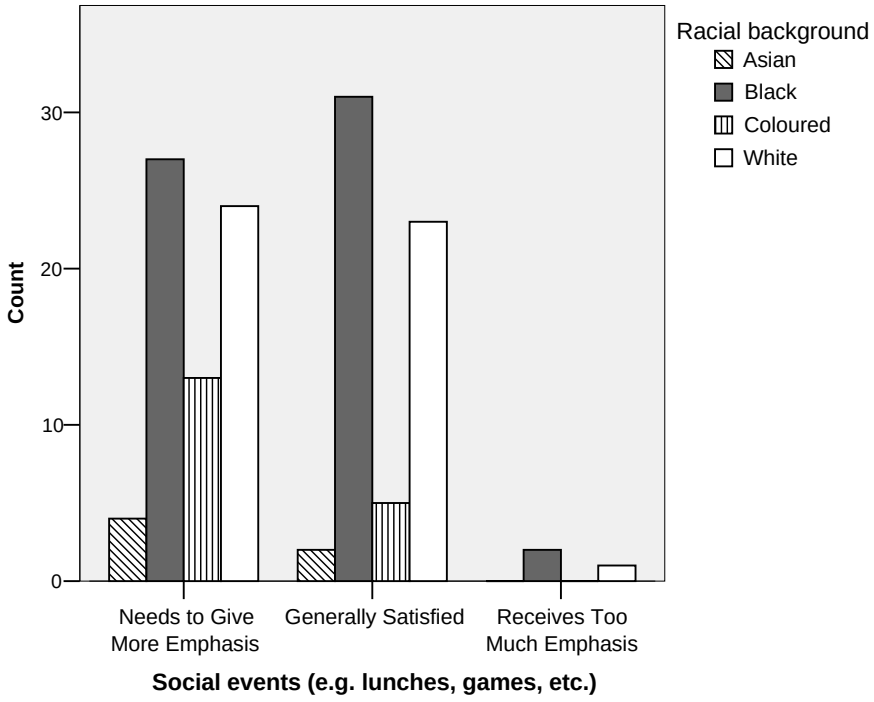
With the notable exception of a number of visitors who gave a "don't know" response, the black, white and coloured responses are remarkably similar. Most people feel that the church does struggle to be "on

time," and many of those interviewed suggested that the church should try to end on time, although a few did not seem to mind when the church services ended. This shows, that at Sandton, the issue of time is not racially based.

In a surprising result, the congregation as a whole did not favour a greater emphasis on social events. The following graph shows the responses to the statement concerning how much priority the church should place on social events (games, lunches, etc.) by indicating how much emphasis it should receive.

In spite of the perceived lack of mixing at Sandton, most people seem to be satisfied with the amount of social programming at Sandton. Indeed, social events received one of the lowest ratings from whites and blacks, although it was more highly favoured by coloureds. In general, most professionals seem to be happy to organise their social events, rather than to rely on the church to provide this for them.

Figure 18: Sandton Church: Satisfaction with Social Event Emphasis



Other areas of programming that seem to be doing well in the congregation are Pathfinders, Prison Ministry, and Women's Ministry, although support from the congregation is limited. A brief analysis of each of these areas is given below

6.4.1 Prison Ministry Project

The prison ministry project began early in 2001 when Sharon April, a teacher for juvenile delinquents, was able to gain access for the church to the prison, where religious groups were not usually allowed.

At the time of my interview with Miranda, who is one of those in charge of this project, there were sixty juveniles between the ages of 14 and 22 who were attending the Sabbath services at the prison. The project is being run in conjunction with Orlando East Church (in the "black" Trans-Oranje Conference).

After the Sabbath services, a number of the juveniles stay behind for Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons, and at the time of the interview, twenty had already graduated from the first section of this course.

Support from Sandton fluctuates, according to Miranda, and tends to be more spectator support. Sharon, Miranda and Sebello are the key members involved in this project, but most others tend to come and "see" rather than offer meaningful commitment.

6.4.2 Women's Ministry

Women's ministry projects have undergone several changes in the congregation. In the first stage of my involvement with Sandton, this was under Miranda, and then shifted to a new leader, Gail. Miranda's focus was more on community projects, whereas Gail tends to focus on events for and by women.

The struggle at Sandton is to get people to participate. As Miranda put it, "Sandton is quite happy to give goods and money rather than time." Gail, a forthright coloured lady, also feels the lack of support, although the reasons given by the congregants would probably vary from those given. Gail has since been replaced by yet another lady, and women's ministries programs appear to be struggling in the congregation.

6.4.3 Pathfinders and Adventurers

The church runs a Pathfinder club (similar to Boy Scouts or Girl Guides) and Adventurer club (similar to Brownies/Cub Scouts) that meet on Saturday afternoons. About thirty-five children attend, of which twelve belong to the Pathfinders. These groups are racially mixed, but according to one leader, many parents see them as "all black." Her personal response was, "I don't think of colour." Most of the children attend faithfully and more than three-quarters attend every week. The children who do attend seem to mix together well and without racial barriers.

6.4.4 Other Programs

The program at Sandton shows mixed representation at most meetings, but with natural and comfortable divisions occurring in some meetings (such as the Bible study classes). There are, however, differences

in perception of how much programming is needed in the church, with blacks generally favouring communal programs, and whites wanting more individualistic flexibility.

6.5 LEADERSHIP

Leadership within the congregation is shared between three groups. The first and most significant of these is the church board, which has the power to make executive decisions. The church board is made up of elders, those elected by the church as heads of departments, and the church pastor. The board combines members of both services, although the ratio may vary. The second significant leadership group is made up of the two worship committees who manage the style, programming and personnel of the worship services. Difficulties with program and people are often channelled through these two committees. Finally, there is the pastor who has the ability to make executive decisions between board meetings and to influence the direction and movement of the church.

Leadership is seen very differently by different members of Sandton Church. Almost everyone feels that Sandton has tremendous leadership potential, and the talent available is, as one interviewee stated, "overwhelming." However, it is also apparent that some of the members feel that "it's almost like they're tired" and "they seem to be burnt out." Sandton has a number of strong leaders who have carried the church over the years. One board member shared a perspective on this, saying, "Running the church for so long brings continuity and stability, but also makes them resistant to change."

It does seem as if a small core of leaders is carrying the bulk of work in the church, and attempts to widen this group have not met with much success. The reasons for this appear to be two-fold. Firstly, there are those on the outside of the *inner sanctum* that feel that the ones running the program are doing a good job and that there is no need to get involved. They, for one reason or another, are happy to simply attend the service and enjoy the worship program. For others, there is a feeling of frustration. They want to be involved, but they feel that Sandton's leadership is opposed to the idea.

A number of those who attend or who have attended Sandton have very strong views about what should happen in the church, but they feel that the church is not open to their opinions or to their leadership (though this group is in the minority).

A number in the church sees the church board as having no forward mission. One member of the board stated, "There's no consensus of mission." Each member of the board seems to have a unique perspective on what direction the church should go (see earlier section). All of this makes leadership difficult. On the racial question, it is obvious that the racial mix is seen positively by some members of the board, and fairly negatively by others.

Pastoral leadership in this volatile situation has also come under attack. When Bill Underwood came into Sandton, he came into a congregation that was seemingly vibrant and growing. However, this apparent vitality hid a much more precarious underside. Besides the many yuppies attending the congregation who were on their way out (see earlier section), the church has been through a number of traumatic crises that have consumed the emotional energy of the pastor and some of the leadership.

Countless examples of these traumatic incidents could be given, but two will suffice. A key leader in the second service was Daniela Andrimov. She had pulled the church together and supported Ian Hartley's mission. In 1998, Daniela was a coordinator for the wedding of a former member, Heather van Eck, whose parents are active members of the congregation. On the day of the wedding Daniela fell asleep at the wheel and was killed in the resulting car accident. She had been very involved in reaching out to the black members of the congregation, and her death deeply affected the emotional climate in the congregation. Another incident involved the divorce of two key leaders in the second service. As a result, one now attends the first service, and one attends the second service. Many in the congregation were divided over their response to the break-up of the marriage.

In addition to these tragedies, the members of the congregation often told stories of hijackings, housebreakings and theft. Obviously, this kind of emotional trauma within the congregation required healing, and Bill Underwood focused on counselling and relational dynamics to deal with the situations as they arose. For some in the congregation, this was particularly effective. However, others felt that the congregation lost momentum and direction.

A number within the congregation became dissatisfied with the church leadership, and especially the preaching style, of the current pastor. However, these explicitly-stated views are balanced by quieter members of the congregation who indicated their support for the pastor in the congregational survey. For instance, 13 people stated that pastoral leadership was their *primary* reason for attending Sandton Church (the third highest overall reason). Further, 42 percent indicated that they attended Sandton Church *specifically* because they enjoyed the pastoral leadership they found there.[70]

Criticism of Bill Underwood fell into three main categories:

(a) A feeling that his preaching was not reaching them. Some felt that it was too "psychological," others that it was "rambling." Others simply admitted, "He doesn't preach like Ian Hartley."

(b) A perception that he was not "in touch" with the church, and that his counselling was consuming his time so that he was not aware of what was happening in the church as a whole.

[70] This contrasts with other reasons for attending of which the lowest scoring was "I like the mission of this church" (19 percent) and the highest, "I feel very comfortable here" (67 percent).

(c) A perception that his leadership was not as strong and direct as Ian Hartley's used to be: "Ian gave strong leadership; Bill takes a curving, indirect approach." One member complained, "He never gave his vision for the church."

Many in the congregation feel that this criticism is not warranted, and get irritated when Bill Underwood is compared with Ian Hartley. One man was quite forthright. "I prefer operating under Bill. In Ian's time, the church was very cliquey. Ian had a few close friends in the church and he was always visiting them and socializing with them. Bill has been more balanced—he tries to spend his time with everyone." Indeed, in an interview with Bill Underwood, he confirmed that he had intentionally not developed close friends within the congregation, and that he had tried remaining available to everyone.

Some of the black people, particularly, seemed to enjoy Bill's preaching. They found it stimulating and useful, and felt that he had a good pulpit ministry. This view was shared by some of the older members. "Ian gave wonderful sermons, but had his own doctrine. We really enjoy Bill Underwood's ministry to us."

Leadership, like the other areas at Sandton, has two sides to it. One is the positive picture of a church that has capable and dynamic leaders who enthusiastically give of their time and talents. The other side is the flip of the coin. The leaders are overworked, tired and burnt-out. A number of them are considering leaving or doing less in the congregation. There has been strong criticism of the pastor by some in the congregation. The pastor was often faced with impossible and conflicting expectations. Professional people with high standards came with their own opinions. In the congregation, it became apparent that everyone felt drained by the crises that they have faced, as well as challenged by the difficulty of dealing with an uncertain future. And there seemed to be a lack of team direction and consensus among the key leaders in the church, although there appeared to be a willingness to work together in this area.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

This case study report of Sandton has been presented in narrative or "story" form, with the objective of telling a story as it has been told. As such, it reflects personal and individual biases of both those interviewed and the interviewee. This report is not meant to be a comprehensive report on the "health" of Sandton, but rather an insight into the process of racial transition in the congregation.

A principal concern in this study has been to understand the dynamics of racial interaction in a congregation that is undergoing change. As such, Sandton has proved to be a fertile field of study, showing the complex patterns that occur in a family of believers when a fairly rapid racial transition

occurs in a previously homogeneous congregation. Here is a summary of insights according to the previously discussed sections.

6.6.1 History

The history of Sandton shows the following key characters as well as the roles they have played:

1. Strong lay-directed white leadership in both the founding of the congregation and its continued development.
2. The influx of white "yuppies" with the introduction of the second service aimed specifically at them, but with the resulting exodus when this service no longer suited their tastes. A number of these, however, stayed on to become church leaders.
3. The influx of black foreigners, mainly immigrants, starting the first signs of colour at Sandton, with mainly the articulate ones becoming involved in the church.
4. The influx of local black "yuppies" coming mainly into the second service, and a number of them moving into leadership positions in that service.
5. The pivotal roles of Ian Hartley and Bill Underwood as long-term pastors of the congregation. The first built upon his vision to create a congregation for secular people. The second focussed on counselling ministry to those affected by crises in the church.

The history of Sandton shows that it has undergone a remarkable transformation from its original objectives, and is now a thriving and dynamic multiracial congregation on the very precipice of identity-threatening change.

6.6.2 Congregational Profile

Sandton is a multi-racial congregation that has seen rapid racial transition, particularly in the second service. It has seen a loss of many of its young white professionals, and it seems that this may have been partly racially related. It attracts many visitors, though many of those who have been there for a year or more have not transferred their membership. As a result of this transition and lack of membership, many in Sandton do not identify with the congregation's identity, program or mission.

The church is largely made up of "comfort groups" that mostly mix in their own circles, although members of these groups are friendly to one another during services. Sandton is mostly seen a friendly and warm congregation by its members. It attracts a large number of educated professionals to its services, although the church board is generally older and whiter than the congregation.

6.6.3 Racial Identity and Perspectives

Those at Sandton do not perceive a great amount of obvious prejudice in the congregation. However, some key leaders in the congregation have very strong racial positions. Whites, as a whole, tend to over-estimate their inclusivity, while blacks appear to be somewhat forgiving of racial smugness. The greatest difference between the two races concerns how far racial mixing and interaction should go, with many whites feeling unsure about mixing socially, racially mixed dating and the need to have deep friendships across races. Blacks, on the other hand, are very pro-integrationist, though sometimes suspicious of white people's motives. There is also a difference between the races with regards to the amount of talk about racial issues that should be allowed in the church.

6.6.4 Worldview

A great deal of difference in the congregation exists between its different members with regard to worldview. Most favour a humanistic response to the challenge of racial transition, suggesting that more social interaction is the key factor in overcoming prejudice (rather than spiritual growth).

6.6.5 Congregational Processes and Strategic Planning

Most leadership in the church is focussed on the smooth running of the Sabbath morning services. Crises are generally handled by the pastor or directed through the two worship committees and/or Sabbath School Superintendent to the Church Board. It is clear that the congregation is seen as having many strengths, including an attractive worship program, friendly environment, and professional human resources. On the other side, leadership in the church is worried about evangelistic outreach, their own tendency to be overworked, lack of commitment to the church from its transitional membership, and how to handle the future of the church. There is no clear consensus as to who is to give direction to the church.

6.6.6 Racial Transition

Different members view racial transition in different ways. Transition has happened fairly smoothly, to date, but some members fear what tomorrow may bring. Some whites feel that blacks are deliberately "moving in" to take over a formerly white church. Others more naturally ascribe it to changing demographics in the area. Blacks and coloureds are obviously coming in larger numbers to the services, but many of them do not become members and most are not in leadership positions. Whites and blacks differ on their view of the church's future. Most blacks see the church as continuing to be multi-racial, whereas most whites see it as becoming black. Thus, racial transition has both positive and negative elements, with some feeling that it has gone very smoothly, but many feeling that the future of Sandton as a mixed congregation is uncertain.

6.6.7 Program

The most significant programs in the church are the Sabbath morning services, with limited involvement by members outside of these services. The two services have elements in common, but are also very different and have a very different "ethos" to them. In terms of programming outside of these services, blacks and coloureds show a higher interest in these than do whites. And, in addition, blacks are more likely to favour communal programs, such as those on Sabbath afternoon, rather than individual programs such as Bible studies and training in personal witnessing. Other programs in the church are mixed, but participation is limited and does not generally involve the congregation as a whole.

6.6.8 Leadership

Most people who attend Sandton agree that it has tremendous leadership potential. However, it is also perceived that a small leadership group is doing the bulk of the organizational work at Sandton, and that they are on the verge of "burnout." Some feel that the existing leaders have brought continuity but also inflexibility in a time of transition. There are many different perspectives on where the congregation should go, so that it is difficult for any leader to give direction in the process of change. The congregation also has high expectations of their leadership and a tendency to make, at times, unfair comparisons. The result has been criticism of both pastoral and lay leadership. However, most of the congregation seems to be unaware of these internal dynamics, and they see the congregation as vibrant and dynamic, with gifted leaders.

6.6.9 The Path Ahead

As the Sandton church has undergone racial transition and change, the practical challenges faced by many have helped formulate the questions of praxis that will guide both our sociological and theological analysis in this study. The reality of change is that it brings opportunity and challenge, anticipation and fear. We have seen that racial change is not the only change that has impacted on this congregation, although it seems to have been the most significant one. Sandton will continue to grow and be challenged in its quest to be an authentic Christian congregation as it faces continued racial and cultural change.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *CASE STUDY OF THE UMBILO SDA CHURCH*

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The Umbilo Seventh-day Adventist Church is located on the outskirts of the central Durban metropolitan area. Umbilo was particularly important to this research project because of its rich heritage, positive interracial climate, and prestige as a significant Adventist church in South Africa. Thus, the church represents the impact of racial and cultural transition on a mainstream church in South African Adventism.

In our analysis, we will largely focus on the congregation itself, attempting to find implicit and explicit transitional forces. More detailed comparative analysis will be found in later chapters, which deal with an overview of sociological findings (Chapter Nine) as well as a theological response (Chapter Ten).

7.1 HISTORY

7.1.1 Early History

Umbilo Seventh-day Adventist Church's roots extend back to the beginning of the twentieth century and the first Seventh-day Adventist church in the Durban area, which was built on Florida Road around 1915. The church later moved to Keits Avenue and became the main "white" church in the Durban area. The Keits Avenue church eventually outgrew its premises. and a new church was built on Litchfield Road in Umbilo. In November 1965, the church was relocated, and the Umbilo Seventh-day Adventist Church came into existence. From its inception it was an all-white, historically conservative and fairly affluent congregation. It was known as "the Conference church," and most of the office staff from the regional administrative office of the white conference attended the Umbilo Church.

At the time of moving to Umbilo, the church membership was in the region of 260. Within two years of moving in, a hall and adjoining classes were added, and the entire structure was dedicated in 1968. The church was still basically all white, although according to one older member, "you knew which families had a little coloured blood—no one talked about it, but you knew" (Interview 9).

Speaking to the founding families, their description of the church in its early years was that it was growing and influential. They remember a large evangelistic series by an Australian evangelist, Ray Kent, and how people flocked to the new church. In the interviews, the early pastors of Umbilo, Pastors Swanepoel and Thompson, were often described as energetic and professional pastors who helped to bring stability to the growing congregation.

However, in the 1970s the initial growth slowed somewhat. There was a greater turnover of ministers (five pastors served Umbilo in that decade) and there were less evangelistic meetings. The congregation

became known as a somewhat conservative and institutional church in the Durban area. One older member of the congregation who started attending in 1977 remembered Umbilo as always being crowded. "It was always full, and you had to be careful not to sit in someone else's seat" (Interview 16).

A number of the interviewees described Umbilo during this period as being a very "cliquish church" and that it "wasn't very warm." "There was definitely an elite clique," commented one lady, "but a lot of that group have moved away" (Interview 17). However, one couple who were long-term members said that they never found Umbilo cliquish. "It was probably because of my husband's nature and personality—he made the effort to be involved," the wife commented. She went on to say, "We really filled the church in those days… probably about three hundred and fifty members. We were a big tithe-paying church and we got good pastors" (Interview 12).

Among some of the older members there is a nostalgic remembrance of Umbilo's earlier days when the standards were more strictly enforced. Back then the "standards and everything were what we expected of being an Adventist. The standards are different today. The elders we have at the moment, they don't come up to the standard of those we've had in the past, in terms of the way they preach and their biblical knowledge—it's not the same" (Interview 8).

During the early eighties, the church became even more institutional, and seems to have reached a plateau. Comments on the church in this period ranged from "very staid," to "somewhat cold," to "a lot of those people have left." No one in the interviews seemed to remember much of significance from this period (probably because it fell between the early memorable days and more recent history).

The end of the eighties saw a shift of emphasis toward the younger members of the congregation. Firstly, there was the introduction of a vibrant youth program under the leadership of Pastor Gary Grant, who brought in guitars, choruses and youth evangelism. Grant was more phlegmatic and introverted than previous pastors in the church had been, and was therefore less involved in the internal politics of the congregation. Some of the members felt that he was too quiet and retiring. He spent a significant portion of his time building one-on-one relationships with the youth, and he gradually built the youth group into one of the largest and strongest in the Natal-Free State Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (a historically white conference).

The next decade was to see a continued emphasis on the youth. Pastor Nunes brought in youth elders and introduced a younger team into ministry. The next pastor, Mike Faber, developed an almost exclusive focus on the youth, and even the following pastor, nearing-retirement Chris Venter, was known for baptising a number of youth. However, very few of the youth brought in during this decade are still in the church. One parent admitted during an interview that "My fear of what is happening in the church is that

my children won't be Adventist when they grow older (he currently had an older teen). If your ratios are better than ten to one (chance of staying Adventist), then you're doing well" (Interview 11).

The nature of events at Umbilo ensured that the introduction of racial transition would at first go largely unnoticed. Other events and priorities in the congregation took up its time and energy.

7.1.2 History During Period of Early Racial Change

The 1990s saw the first significant colour change at the Umbilo Church. Historic developments in South African politics were changing the social demographics of Durban, including its faith communities. The new pastor at Umbilo Church in 1992, Edgar Nunes, saw the changes and told his elders at their first meeting, "This church is going to become a black church in no time at all." He remembers that they were somewhat surprised at his statement, since there was only a sprinkling of people of colour at the time.

Nunes felt that the church needed to be strategic in how it approached congregational change, and especially how it handled new racial developments in South Africa. Nunes commented in an interview: "I explained that we should minister to all people groups, but unless they focused on ministering to the white group, the church would become black. It's not that I have any objection either way to where the church goes. It's just that I believe the church has a calling to minister to a particular local community and that should be its main focus, but not an exclusive focus" (Interview 27).

Nunes' elders reacted against his suggestion, and looking back, Nunes felt that he may have jumped the gun. "From the perspective of managing change, it was too early. I first should have secured their confidence." At that time, Nunes points out, the church felt very secure in their "white culture," as the church had a very white profile. Even those of other races who did attend only did so (according to Nunes) because they felt isolated from their particular racial grouping. Since there were strong churches in the area for local blacks, coloureds and Indians, Nunes felt that the small number from these groups that did attend Umbilo were there because they were not accepted in their home churches.

A surprising factor for Nunes was the racial and cultural attitudes that he found at Umbilo in the early nineties. The congregation was mainly made up of English-speaking white South Africans, and he found that some were intolerant and most were conservative.

> "They were not very broad-minded with respect to intercultural issues, which was a surprise to me, as I thought the Afrikaners were the conservative ones and that the English-speakers were more liberal."

It was during Nunes' time that the first international blacks arrived at Umbilo. Initially, the first blacks were refugees. Since Edgar Nunes was Portuguese-speaking, a number of Portuguese-speaking refugees found their way to Umbilo.

> "The first blacks were immigrants who entered through Durban, as that was the easiest place to get into South Africa. I remember three Angolans who came in through a long route via Mozambique. The Methodist minister somehow came to know that the Seventh-day Adventist minister spoke Portuguese, and used to refer some of the refugees to me. The Angolans came because they could not join any other black church, because they felt threatened" (Interview 27).

Thus, international refugees joined Umbilo simply because they felt they had no other place to go. However, these refugees never became a significant part of the church. They were regarded kindly and cordially, but did not become integrated into the life of the church.

The most apparent cultural change occurred with the arrival of well-educated English-speaking immigrants who came to do postgraduate studies at the nearby Nelson Mandela Medical Campus as well as other Durban University campuses. Unable to speak the local black languages, they also attended Umbilo out of necessity. Nunes saw these families as bringing in a different flavour to the local church.

> "During the time I was there, I saw the colour profile of the congregation change. Two Zimbabwean doctors came in and a Zimbabwean financier. There was also a man from Tanzania who was doing malaria research at the university. They were mainly well-educated and intellectually far superior to current white church members. From my perspective, they became heavy-weights in the church" (Interview 27).

Thus, cultural and racial change in the congregation was largely limited to an international influx in the 1990s. It appears that there were not many local blacks who attended at this time, because local blacks preferred or felt more comfortable in congregations that spoke Zulu. However, a few local black students who were attending the nearby medical university started visiting Umbilo. Nunes commented that "they were a very loose association. I managed to visit some of them, but they were not the warmest students I have met."

The challenge that impacted on the church was how to involve the new black members in the life of the church. Nunes says that he tried to invite them to be church officers, but they declined. He felt that they refused to take office because they saw the church as being unwelcoming. He says the very body language of the whites in the worship service might have been interpreted by blacks as being stand-offish.

A young man from Tanzania who came to study at the University of Durban, mentioned his experience at Umbilo. He described Umbilo's initial hospitality as "cold." "In our home church," he comments, "the deacon makes sure that the visitor writes his name in the [visitor's] book, then in the service the names

are read out and recognized by the whole congregation, and then members take the visitors home for lunch" (Interview 16). In contrast, his first time at Umbilo was very difficult. It was lonely with only three to five black families. However, he says, a few whites befriended him, and in his case, he was elected as a deacon just one year after his arrival.

Whites remember this as being a period when "the new immigrants were happy to sit there and see things happen. I guess people had to know who you were. At that time there were all whites in the nominating committee, although there was an attempt to integrate the new people" (Interview 7).

One of the black immigrants who came to study postgraduate studies remembered his first impressions of Umbilo. "I found the members aloof. Only two people were friendly. At the time, the congregation only had six people of colour and was 98 percent white. I came because it was the closest Adventist church that I could attend" (Interview 26).

With time he found some of the members were accepting and willing to get to know him. Some, however, continued to make excuses and apologized saying, "I'm sorry, you can't teach a class," and, "things will take time." As a result, he was reticent to move his membership. It was four years before he asked for his membership to be moved.

"I didn't believe we were in the same church and I didn't know whether we were worshipping under the same umbrella. If you sat in the wrong seat, you were told to get up because someone else had sat there for twenty years." He told of how he wouldn't get a Bible study lesson guide because he "wasn't a member." For a long time, he didn't feel part of the fellowship.

The experiences of these immigrants, however, did not significantly impact on the church as a whole. During this early period of the1990s, Nunes comments that racial change was not the central focus of the church. Nunes remembers two issues that significantly sapped the church's energy for change. The first was the introduction of women elders. A core group of elders and members strongly opposed this, and it became a major point of contention in the congregation (see Leadership Processes later on).

Secondly, Nunes was very deliberate in bringing about a transition in the leadership. Thus, rather than focussing on racial change, Nunes concentrated in bringing in leaders with good "interpersonal skills." Nunes devoted time to preaching and promoting relationship skills. He believes that this focus was a crucial factor in the church's continued success in cultural relations, as the new elders that he brought in were people who could work with and be sympathetic to people of diverse backgrounds. One of the members who joined in 1993 remembers that Edgar Nunes made a "big impression" on the church, with people "really caring for one another" (Interview 3). However, the bringing in of new and younger leaders

was traumatic for the congregation, and Nunes' time was more a time of change than it was a time of growth.

After Nunes' departure in 1994, the new pastor, Mike Faber, did not spend much time addressing cultural issues. His focus was on the youth, and under his direction the youth group picked up momentum and vitality. Faber was generally popular with the youth and their parents, but older people in the congregation struggled to adapt to his more contemporary style. One older lady commented, "Faber didn't like old people. He brought the church into disrepute by his antics." Blacks interviewed were generally ambivalent about Faber as a pastor. A young man from Tanzania made this comment: "Faber was good. I didn't know him too well, but he did seem to focus too much on the youth" (Interview 16). Faber's youth emphasis did result in a number of youth baptisms among the white youth, but many of these have since left the church or moved to other parts of the country and the world.

During the early part of Faber's tenure, international blacks tended to be more spectators, reluctant to get involved in a church that they neither understood nor felt fully welcomed them. However, as time went on, they started to become more involved and more visible. Malone, studying at the nearby university, was invited to lead out in a Sabbath School class. By this time, he felt accepted and decided to transfer his membership. "At that time things were changing and there was a new openness," Malone reflected. Within a year of his membership being transferred (1997) he was given a position in the church. However, this increasing involvement of blacks seems to have been a natural development arising out of the length of time that they had been at Umbilo combined with recognition of their abilities. It does not appear to have been a strategic move by either the pastor or the congregation.

Looking back, a number of especially younger and middle-aged interviewees described this period as when the immigrants started bringing in "a lot of new life."

7.1.3 Racial Transition Flourishes

By the time Mike Faber left in 1998, the church's racial climate had made a small but significant change. A large number of white youth had reached young adulthood and were faced with both opportunities to leave Durban and to leave the church. At the same time, the first blacks had started to move into significant positions.

Malone's Sabbath School class became popular among both blacks and whites. One of the middle-aged ladies in the congregation commented on how there was vibrancy in this particular group: "When I would join in, it was always so interesting," she said but then added, "Mother couldn't always understand the accents, so we stopped attending that group" (Interview 18). Malone was both sophisticated and articulate, and a number of whites found his classes more interesting than their regular groups. One of the

white members commented, "Malone and I were on the same wavelength. His class was brilliant and he always got a good flow of discussion" (Interview 13).

In 1998, Chris Venter, an older man and a previous Conference president, became the new pastor of Umbilo. He brought stability to the congregation and was generally well-liked by those interviewed. "He was a strong-character person," one of the elders commented. "He knew what the situation was, and was able to keep us on track. He was a real stabilizer" (Interview 19). His age and perceived wisdom made him especially liked by the blacks in the congregation. One black immigrant called him "a very wise man who loved kids, youth and adults" (Interview 16). Pastor Venter continued to work with the youth, and there was a small but steady flow of youth baptisms in the late 1990s. Even with the exodus of the older white youth, Umbilo's multicultural future looked very promising.

The late nineties was probably the high point in Umbilo's multiracial history. In 1998, Umbilo hosted a satellite evangelistic series broadcast from Soweto with an international black preacher, Fitz Henry. Although catering for mainly a black audience, the Fitz Henry event was attended by a very mixed audience at Umbilo, and resulted in baptisms from all racial groups.

Crises in the congregation helped pull them together as the millennium dawned. During this period Malone had a child who they didn't think would live. The congregation rallied around the family, and the child recovered. A number of white members vividly remember Malone holding up the "miracle child" and saying, "This is an answer to prayer." When an older white deacon died, both white and black members turned out for a moving and bonding funeral.

By this time, blacks had moved into significant positions in the church. Malone was an elder in the church, and another well-spoken young black lady was the Sabbath School Superintendent and regularly led out from the front. Whites were impressed with the sophistication, spirituality and commitment of these international blacks, and felt that their congregation was "alive" again. The new blacks were similar enough culturally to form friendships with the whites in the congregation, and there was a sense of pride about the congregation's new multiracial legacy.

Social events became far more mixed. Church potlucks were well-attended by people from all races. Afternoon programs had fair attendance from the different racial groups. Outside of organized events, interracial friendships started to develop. One black immigrant who was a former rugby player became good friends with some of the white men at the church, and they would attend various sporting events together. One lady even confessed of this period that she felt more comfortable with the immigrant blacks than with the local whites. "They seemed more down-to-earth. I could relate to them better" (Interview 4).

Pastor Venter's gentle and sensitive approach to racial issues also helped minimize the tension during this time. Generally well-respected by both races, he was able to nurture and support the unified diversity in the church.

However, this positive picture of racial relations seemed to be limited to the more progressive whites and the immigrant blacks who shared a somewhat similar culture. Other groups remained isolated from the new multicultural "clique" in the church. Although other blacks started to attend Umbilo, they were not as involved as the "professional immigrants." During this time, a small trickle of refugees continued to arrive at the church, and these newer refugees tended to come from French-speaking areas. A class was started for them, but in general they remained on the outskirts of regular church life. Local black students were also now attending more consistently, but were also involved in a student association that rotated their attendance among the churches, thus limiting their ability to connect to the congregation. Umbilo had very little involvement in the students' activities even though the campus was located nearby.

Many of the older influential whites moved on from Umbilo during this period, and those that remained were generally not very outspoken. Some of these retreated from involvement with the church, and the middle-aged group (which had now become multicultural) largely took over the reins of the church. Some of the older whites continued attending but felt somewhat isolated from the new dynamics in the church.

7.1.4 Rapid Change and Racial Challenges

The beginning of the new millennium saw sudden and rapid cultural change. Pastor Venter was replaced by Gideon Reynecke, who had transferred from Pietersburg in the north. Reynecke came from an Afrikaans background, and some wondered how he would do in a predominantly English and multicultural church. However, he was immediately well-liked for his passion, humour and sensitivity. In fact, all the interviewees were extremely positive about his ministry at Umbilo (see Congregational Processes later). However, a number of factors combined to make this a period of rapid transition.

Firstly, there was an exodus of some of the key black immigrants who had brought such a positive new vibrancy to Umbilo. A number of these had finished their postgraduate studies and were moving on to other work positions. Secondly, there was the continued exodus of the older white youth. Thirdly, there was a growing number of local blacks who now wanted to attend a more multiracial and English-speaking congregation. The growing number of black students at the university facility across the road also increased the number of black people who were likely to attend on a Sabbath morning. Finally, a number of whites, for various reasons, began attending other churches or stopped attending church altogether. Within three years, Umbilo moved from being a majority white to being a majority black congregation.

A Pathfinder group was restarted at this time, but it soon became all black. The children's divisions soon had more black children than white children in them. Church fellowship lunches saw a diminishing attendance from whites, who now ate more regularly at home. They cited distance as their major reason. Blacks, however, continued to attend in larger and larger numbers. The church still has a weekly potluck, but mostly black students attend. Whites, after their initial excitement over afternoon programs, no longer want to spend "the whole day at church." Cultural differences, more hidden at first, now became more apparent.

The reasons for this sudden transition will be examined in greater detail later, but for now it is important to note that both internal and external contextual factors have produced a dramatic shift in a multiracial congregation. This is in spite of the fact that the church had good pastoral leadership and a positive multicultural environment.

Since 2001, when the major portion of this case study was conducted, the church has continued to move toward a stronger black majority, while still maintaining its multiracial flavour. Black adults now outnumber whites significantly, with roughly two to one attending. White youth seem to be even further outnumbered. Three of the four elders are now black. The head deacon and treasurer on the board are white, but the rest of the positions are held by blacks. Gideon Reynecke continues to pastor the church and is still well-liked, but he is unsure of how to best plan for the future in such a rapidly changing multicultural environment.

7.2 IDENTITY

Describing the identity or character of Umbilo Seventh-day Adventist Church, we are forcibly struck by the difficulty of this task in a multiracial church. No single unifying narrative prevails in the congregation. Rather, a diverse number of narratives appear to coexist and even compete with one another. This is not surprising. Patrick Keifert comments that "multiple personalities, which may be unhealthy for individuals… surely are to be expected of complex public communities" (1992:24).

The exploration of identity will be done once again through the racial lens, using this to understand the impact racial transition has had on the more static concepts of identity. The identity will also be examined from the perspective of the different groups in the congregation, seeing how racial change has impacted on their perceptions of others, themselves and God.

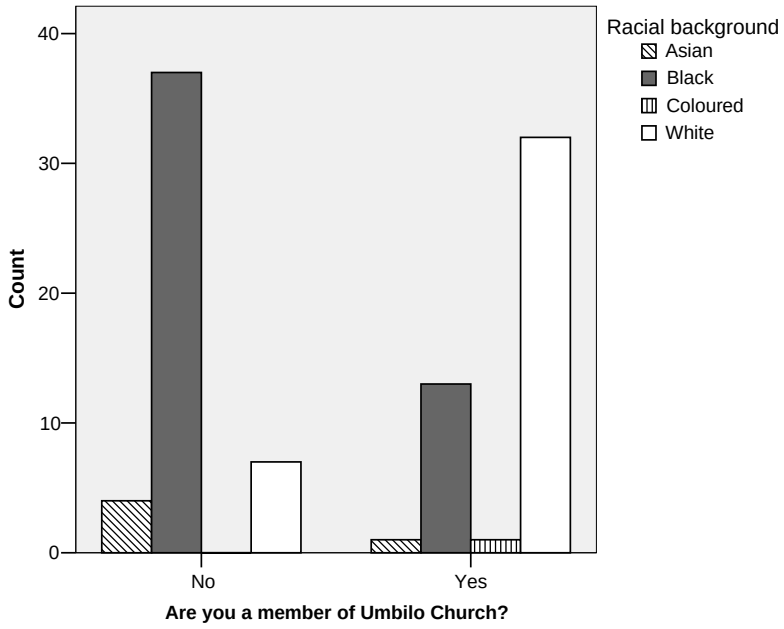
7.2.1 Congregational Profile

On 29 September, 2001, a congregational survey was conducted in the Umbilo Church. There were 99 survey responses, and while not every member of the congregation completed the survey, the results

nevertheless suggest the opinions of those who attend the congregation on a typical Sabbath. Children under the age of sixteen were not included in the survey.

The survey indicated that *attendance* at Umbilo was approximately 50 percent black and 40 percent white, with 10 percent from other races or unknown. However, actual *membership* at the time of the survey was largely white.

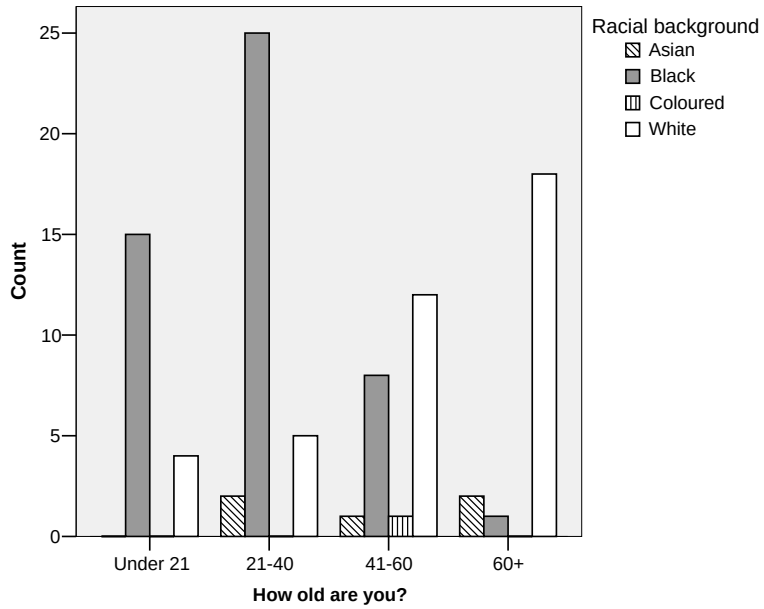
Figure 19: Umbilo Church: Membership Analysis



While it was identified that two key black families were absent on the day of the congregational survey, the above graph nevertheless suggests that Umbilo had only a small group of committed black core members, in spite of the large black attendance. At the time, the church board included only two blacks. This was despite the fact that there was an intentional attempt by the pastor to have more black leadership. However, both the membership and the leadership have shifted since the survey, and four of the five elders are now black (2004).

Race is not the only grouping dynamic in the congregation. Within the white and black groups, there are sub-groups that operate quite distinctly in the congregation.

Figure 20: Umbilo Church: Age Analysis



The above composition, when combined with actual attendance on a regular basis (as gathered from interviews and personal observation), suggests that Umbilo is a diverse multi-racial church with significant numbers in each of the major age groups. Umbilo has six major groups in the church:

(i) a significant mainly middle-class and middle-aged working population of mixed racial background who largely run the church,

(ii) a large number of black students (mostly South African) who attend infrequently and seem to have little direct involvement in the church,

(iii) a group of retired older white members who have been in the church a long time, but though attending regularly, do not generally hold church offices,

(iv) a smaller group of younger whites and "westernised" blacks who have their own youth group, and are somewhat involved in the church,

(v) an even smaller group of senior white youth, who have their own social grouping in the church, and

(vi) a number of children of a variety of racial backgrounds, mainly black, most of whose parents attend the church.

In addition to these groupings, there are refugees who attend the church are a regular basis, some of whom are beginning to become involved in the church, but most of whom are not.

There have always been a small number of "Indians" and other Asians as well as coloureds present in the congregation, but on the particular day that this survey was given the number of respondents was too small to be statistically significant in comparison with the larger group. Thus, in analysing the data, the

graphs have in most cases been adjusted to indicate the two major groupings (blacks and whites) who responded to the survey.

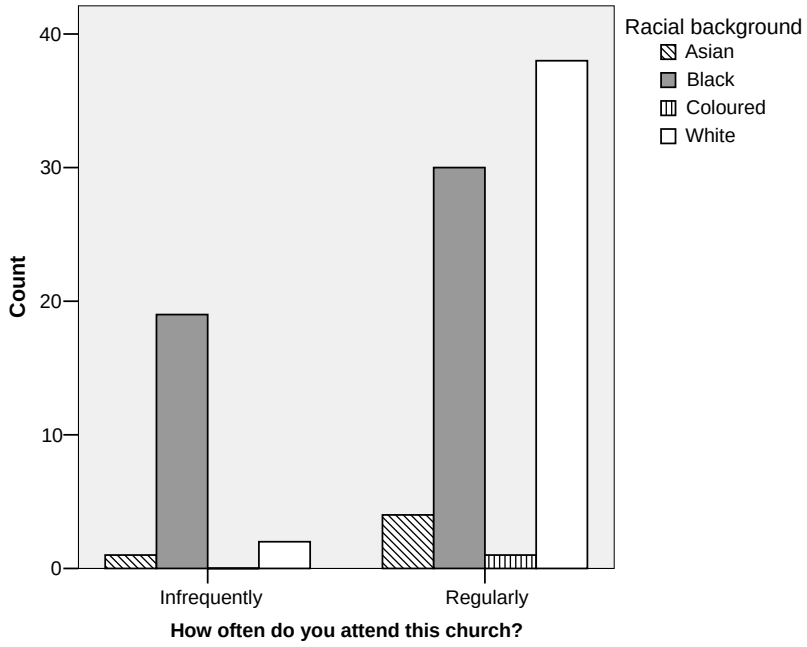
In general, the educational level is fairly high in the congregation (a degree or college diploma being the norm), except in the older white group who tended to have only a high school education. The implication is that new attendees coming into the congregation are largely educated or in the process of receiving an education.

7.2.2 Racial Transition and Its Impact on Identity

As mentioned, the primary lens through which the congregation's identity will be viewed is through the lens of race, which while not the single determining factor in the congregation's struggle for identity, is arguably its most significant factor.

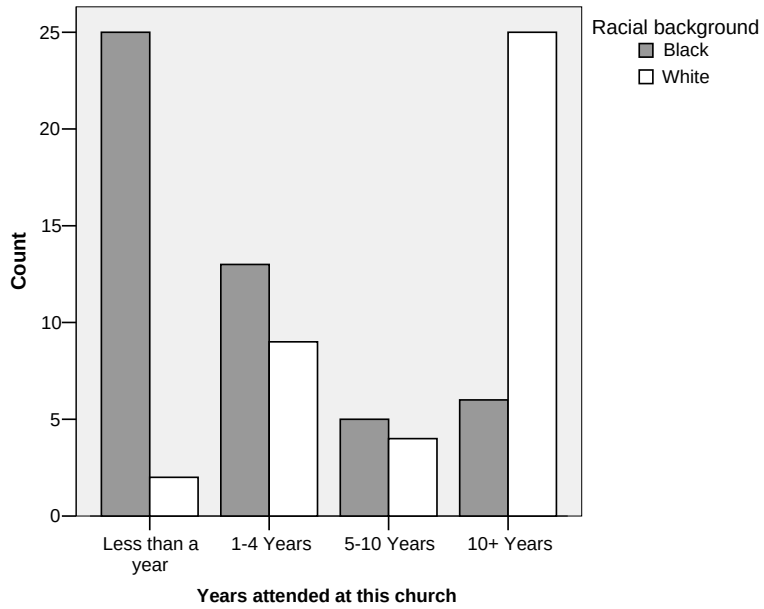
Viewing the congregation through a racial lens highlights a number of important aspects to church life. For instance, while Umbilo has until recently had almost the same number of whites and blacks attending on a regular basis, there are many blacks who "visit" the church infrequently, thus creating the perception that the church is predominantly black.

Figure 21: Umbilo Church: Attendance Analysis



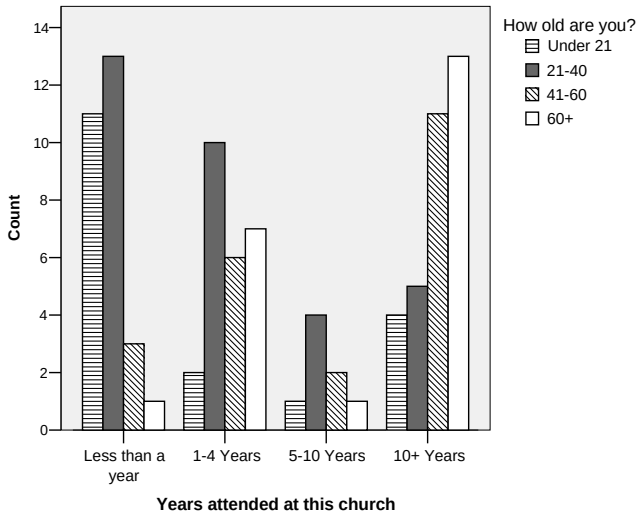
When the number of visitors in the congregation is then compared with growth trends in the church, it is clear that the racial face of Umbilo is likely to change. The following graph suggests that the church is successfully attracting new black attendees but is not reaching new white members. It also suggests that many of those who were baptised five to ten years ago have since left the church.

Figure 22: Umbilo Church: Analysis of Years of Attendance by Race



The graph makes clear that the congregation is going to become more "colourful" in the next few years. When the above graph is then compared with an age analysis according to years attended at the church, we notice that not only is the church becoming more colourful, it is also becoming younger.

Figure 23: Umbilo Church: Analysis of Years of Attendance by Age

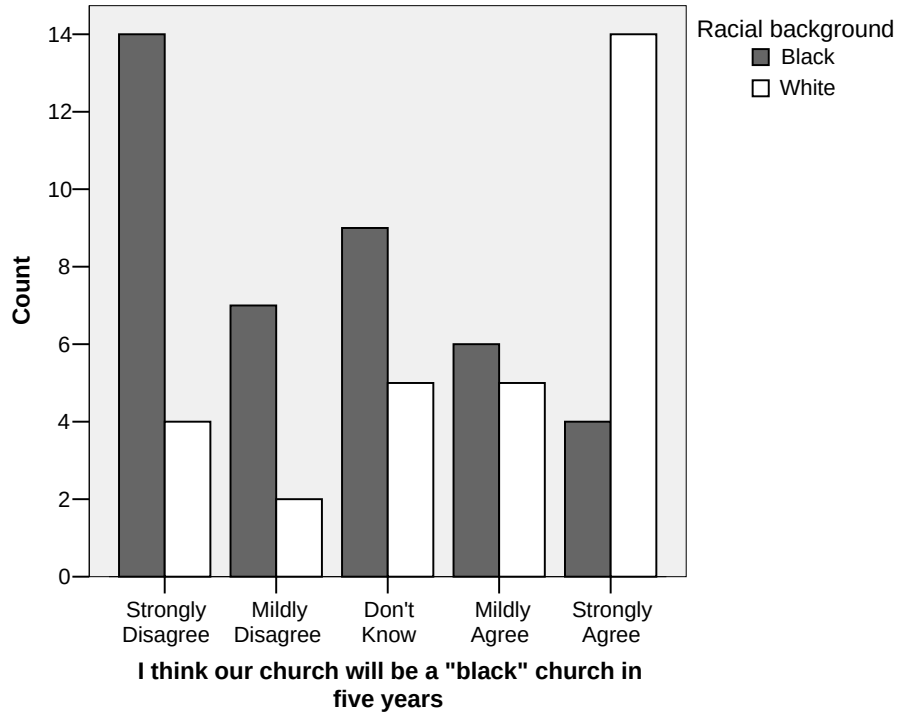


However, the commitment of many of the older and middle-aged white members means they are likely to remain with Umbilo during this transition to a younger, more colourful congregation. The younger white members are much more ambivalent about how long they will stay. Some of them are planning on leaving South Africa, and others are even unsure about their commitment to Adventism. Some who like

the pastor intend to stay as long as he stays. They tend to be much more "market-oriented" in their approach, attending whichever church has the best to offer. Although there have been many baptisms among the white youth (especially between 5-10 years ago), this is the group in which the greatest exodus has occurred.

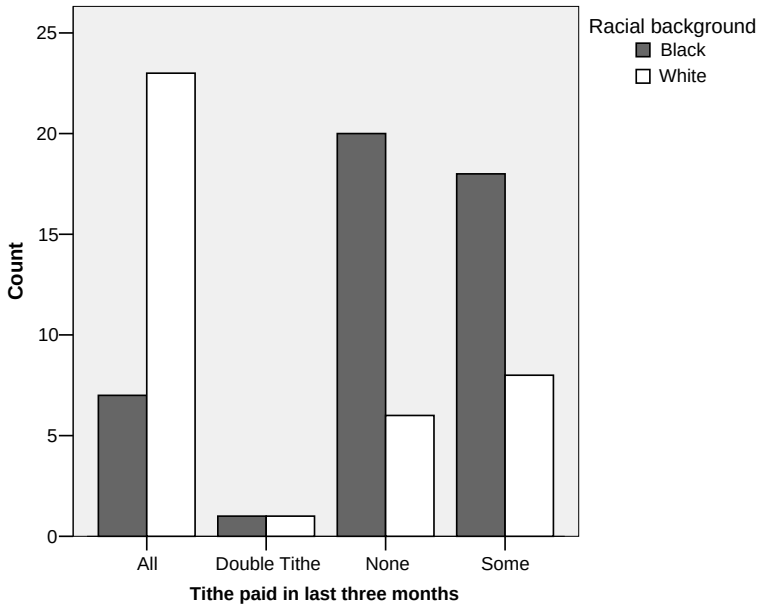
One of the sharpest areas of difference between the two races is over the future of the church. Whereas most whites see the church as being black in five years' time, most blacks disagreed with this statement. From the interviews, it became clear that two different racial perceptions were at work in the congregation. On the one hand, the whites have seen the dramatic change in the congregation's racial profile and suspect that it will only be a matter of time until they are the minority. They see their acceptance of that change and their commitment to the congregation as part of their positive racial attitude. The blacks, on the other hand, see their optimism for a multiracial congregation as their positive approach to the racial issue. For them to admit that the congregation is going to "become mainly black" is to admit failure in their interracial relations.

Figure 24: Umbilo Church: Will be a "Black" Church in Five Years



Financial commitment to the church in the form of tithes was one factor considered in assessing the commitment of different racial groups to the church's mission.[71] The graph below indicates the different racial responses to the question, "In the last three months, how much tithe have you returned?" The response indicated that very few blacks (at the time of the survey) returned a full tithe. This time, the reason could not be linked to wanting to support a black conference (see the previous chapter on Sandton), since the regional administrative structure in Natal is racially integrated. In interviews, some of the blacks indicated that they did not earn a salary (black students), and other blacks indicated financial difficulties or personal reasons. However, it appears that this lack of tithe-paying is beginning to change, and those blacks who are committed tithe-payers also sacrificially give for church projects and needs.

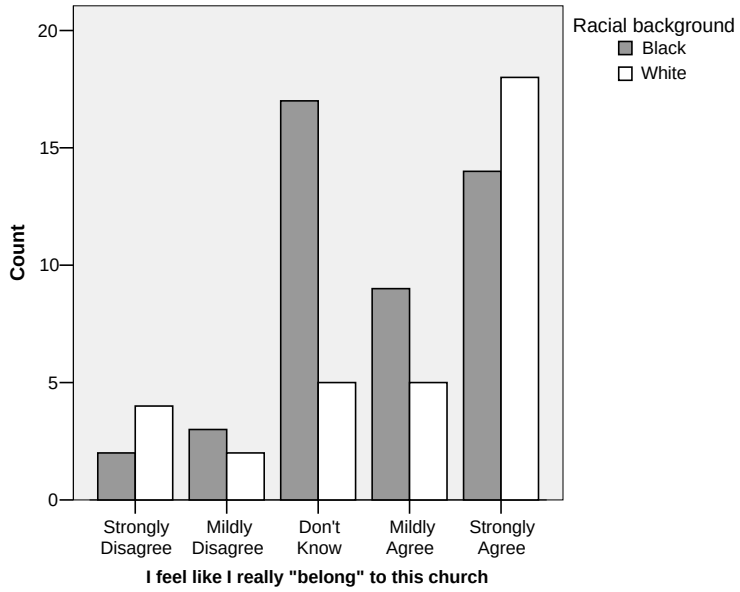
Figure 25: Umbilo Church: Tithe Return Analysis



When asked outright about their sense of belonging in the church, the number of people who felt like they "really belong to this church" was higher (see the graph following). However, this sense of belonging has not translated itself into either membership or tithe-paying. And there are still a significant number of people (mainly black) who "don't know" if they do actually belong in the congregation. These statistics would seem to be typical of a church in transition. A large number of new people are at the margins of the congregation, wondering whether or not they should make this congregation their home. It seems to take a fair amount of time for those that do begin to identify with the congregation to make their transition to becoming a full-fledged member.

[71] Non tithe-payers are theoretically excluded from holding office in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Church Manual, 2000 edition, page 51), but this policy is usually implemented in a very lenient fashion.

Figure 26: Umbilo Church: Feeling of "Belonging"



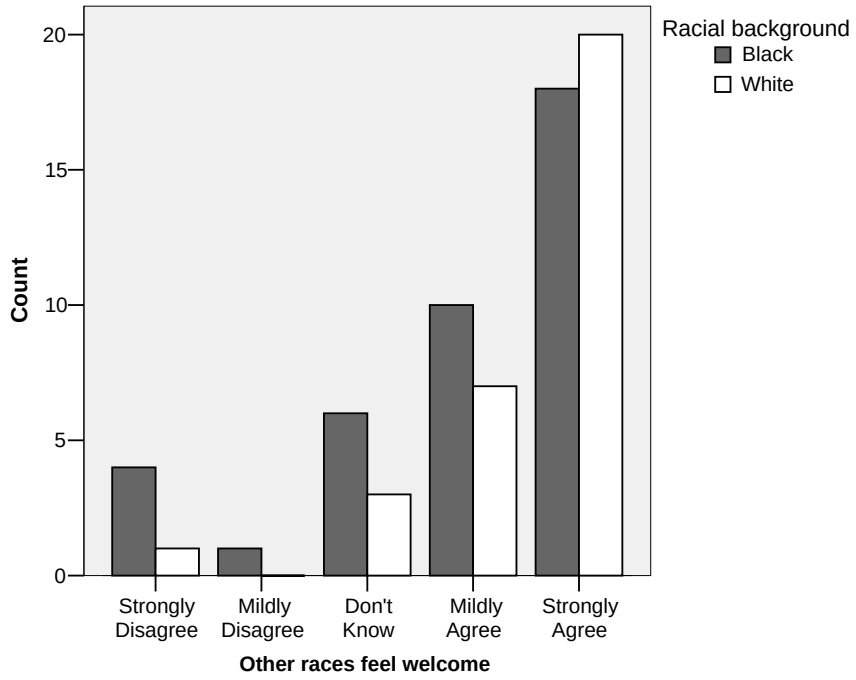
These statistics tell us that Umbilo is undergoing rapid attendance change, but slower membership change. Like Sandton, there appear to be two overlapping movements: an exodus of white youth and a simultaneous influx of younger blacks. During this process of change a number of incoming blacks have started to identify themselves with Umbilo, but have not yet moved their membership or their tithe-paying to the church.

7.2.3 Racial Attitudes

How do the members of Umbilo Church relate to each other in terms of racial attitudes? Has the Christian gospel of the inclusive kingdom impacted on their perceptions of one another? Several components of both the congregational survey and the interviews were directed to these questions.

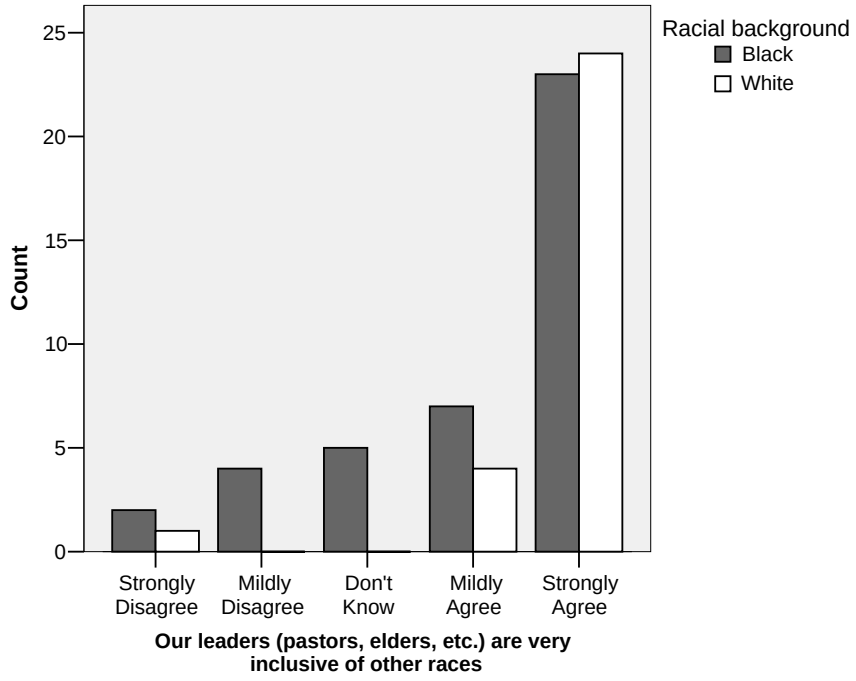
Overall, there was a very positive response toward issues of race in the interviews. Umbilo was more often identified as being "cliquey" than anything else. However one young man stated, "It's not that we're cliquish, but you stick with your own." People did not generally see race as the main reason for exclusion or inclusion. It seems that even though there are a number of distinct social groups in the congregation, at least some are racially mixed. In answer to the statement, "other races feel welcome in this church," the response was very positive.

Figure 27: Umbilo Church: Other Races Feel Welcome



Only a few blacks disagreed with this statement, showing that both blacks and whites generally feel that Umbilo is "non-racist." This is particularly true when it comes to the leaders of the church. The accepting attitude of both the pastors and the elders has led the congregants at Umbilo to see their leaders in a very positive light when it comes to race. The congregational survey asked participants to rate the following statement: "Our leaders (pastors, elders, etc.) are very inclusive of other races." Their response was encouraging.

Figure 28: Umbilo Church: Racial Inclusivity of Leadership



Similar results (though not as dramatically affirming) were given for statements such as "My inter-racial contacts in the church have been very positive" and "Black and white people mix well in this church." Interviews revealed very little racial antagonism, although occasional (unintentional) and oblique racial slurs did surface.

There were very few in the congregation who admitted to strong prejudice. When asked to respond to the statement, "If I am honest, I have strong negative feelings toward other races," over two thirds reacted against this statement. Only seven respondents identified themselves as strongly prejudiced. Of course, this kind of response is not unusual. Studies have shown that very few people are willing to admit to their own prejudice.

Prejudice was also tested in more specific areas relating to both self and extended racial perceptions in the congregation. Congregants were asked to respond to two racial perceptions: black racial sensitivity and white racial superiority. The results show that blacks in this congregation generally see themselves as being more sensitive with regard to racial issues than they should be, but that in spite of this, they do not (generally) perceive whites as being more arrogant.

Figure 29: Umbilo Church: Blacks Are Too Sensitive About Racial Issues

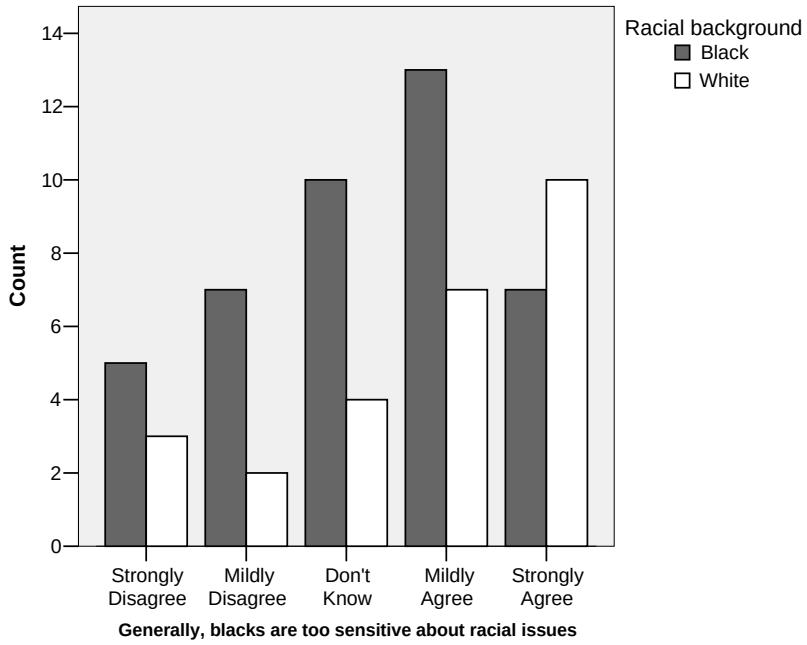
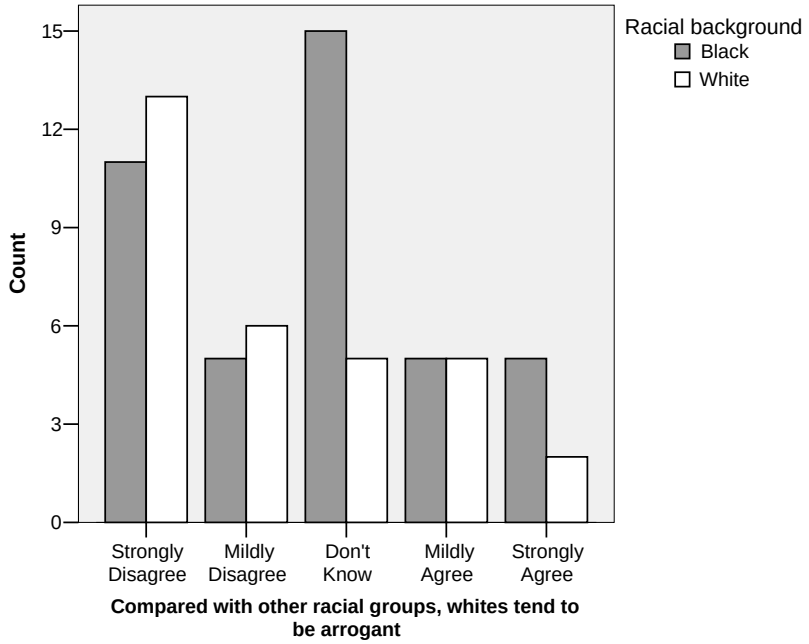


Figure 30: Umbilo Church: Whites Tend to be Arrogant

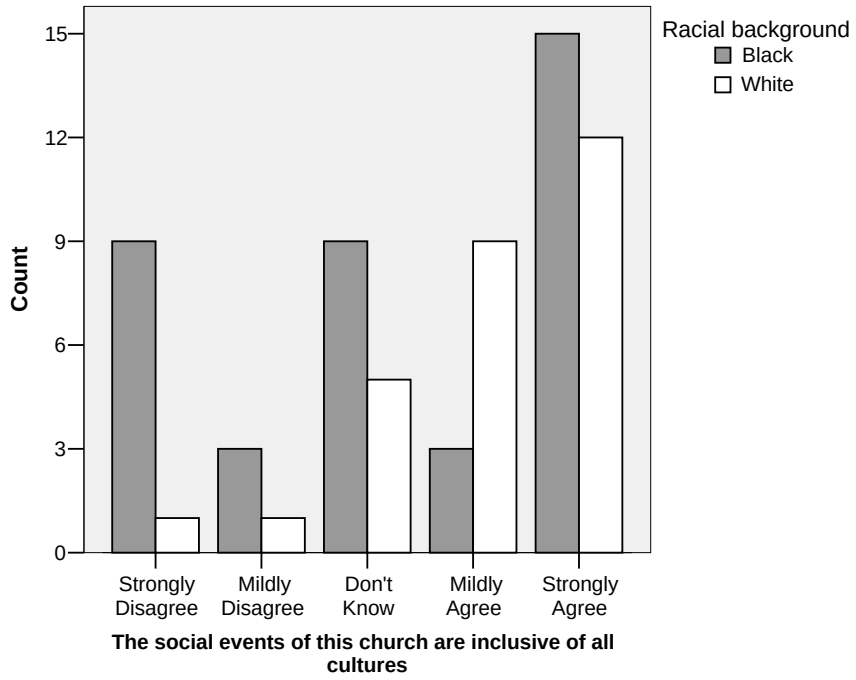


The fairly large number of blacks who responded with "don't know" suggests that they have not had sufficient interaction with whites to be able to assess this statement. It seems that part of the success of racial relations at Umbilo comes from a lack of obvious and overt prejudice. The "pre-judgements" of the various races before their interaction with each other seems to have been neutral or positive.

Social interaction within the church was also seen positively, although actual interaction was far less than intended. For instance, although over 70 percent of the respondents to the congregational survey indicated that they would feel comfortable attending a wedding or funeral of another race, actual attendance is much less. As another example, only a third of the congregation said that they had invited other races into their homes. Some interviewees were extremely positive about race relations in the church, but appeared to have done little about socializing with other races.

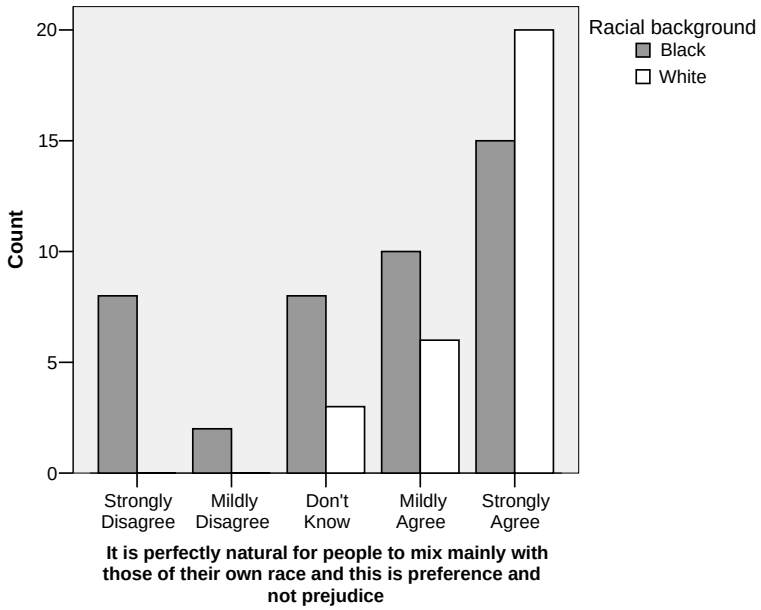
In terms of congregational events, although less positive, respondents generally thought that social events were inclusive (see graph following), but interviews revealed that outside of Sabbath morning programs, blacks had become the primary participants. Whites saw themselves as still being "included," but some blacks felt that the events must not be inclusive if whites chose not to attend.

Figure 31: Umbilo Church: Cultural Inclusivity of Social Events



Umbilo Church attendees, however, did not seem overly perturbed by the tendency of people to mix mainly within their own social groupings. When asked to respond to the statement, "It is perfectly natural for people to mix mainly with those of their own race and this is preference not prejudice" most people responded positively.

Figure 32: Umbilo Church: Perfectly Natural to Mix Mainly with Own Race



It is significant that no whites disagreed with this statement and that the majority of blacks agreed with it, even though their response was much more widely dispersed among the options. Racial attitudes, in this

regard, might be the result of two factors influencing each other: (a) paradigms of pluralism which suggest that different ways of thinking and acting can exist harmoniously alongside each other, and (b) the integration of different groups into the congregation at different times and for different reasons.

This last factor became apparent in interviews. It was clear that most of the older whites joined the congregation over ten years ago. They attend church but largely socialise with each other. However, in the last decade four new groups have come into the church in separate movements. Middle-aged whites, including several church board members, came in during the last decade and formed their own social niche. They were joined by professional black immigrants, some of which became part of the same social circle. Other local black professionals quickly formed friendships with the immigrant blacks and formed a new sub-group. Meanwhile, white youth were being baptised into the church and initially had a strong identity in the congregation. However, this has since largely dissolved as the white youth have left. Black students came into the church through the proximity of the University to the congregation, and they have remained a strong group that has a society of its own operating outside of the congregation. Because each of these groups has come in through different social forces, they have remained somewhat isolated from each other, with stronger intragroup bonds than extragroup bonds.

The congregational identity is therefore diversely seen by the different groups. Older white members tend to show *resignation* in their approach to the church. They have seen a great deal of change and sometimes are frustrated by how things are run in the church, but feel that they have no other place to go. Since they do not generally hold leadership positions, they feel as if they have little power or ability to change the church. Middle-aged whites and blacks are the most positive about the state of the church and its future. They are generally *optimistic* about where the church is going, even though some of the whites will openly discuss the realistic possibility that the church will become black over time.

Younger whites (with a few notable exceptions) are generally *ambivalent* about the congregation. They are positive about some aspects and negative about others. Some were committed to the message of the church, others to the social group, and some to their youth leaders. As a result, as aspects of the church change, so does the commitment of the youth. Some admitted to getting baptised because they had received Bible studies for so long that they felt they owed it to their youth leader to be baptised, even though they weren't one hundred percent committed to the Adventist church.

The black students (again, with a few notable exceptions) were *onlookers* in the congregation. In a group interview with fourteen students, similar sentiments about Umbilo were expressed. They found the people warm but the services dull and formal, although they say they've adapted. They admitted to being a cohesive group with their own society on the campus. Even at Umbilo, they met in a separate Sabbath School class, although the teacher of the class was sometimes white. The students stayed for church

lunches, but noted that not many other members came (the lunch is provided by a few black families). The students admitted to drifting in and out of the church and said that they came to Umbilo "when nothing else is happening." None of the students were members, although some claimed that they were thinking about it. Since only members generally hold positions in the church, the students were not actively involved in leadership at Umbilo.

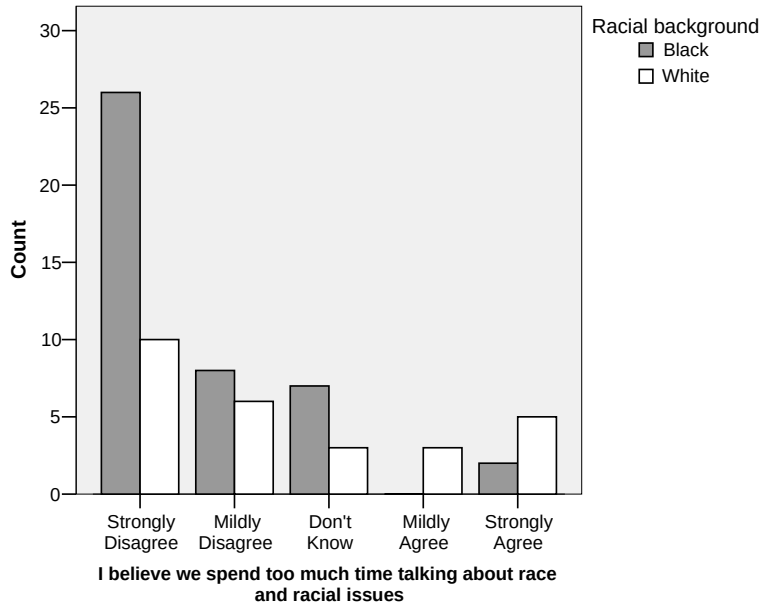
These differing views in the congregation suggest the difficulties of establishing a common identity for the congregation. Somehow, the church needs to develop a common narrative which is inclusive of but not destructive of the different racial groupings in the church. Beyond worshipping together, there appears to be very little interaction.

Challenges with forming a common identity are not limited to social events. The most sensitive and widely divergent views on racial relations were once again found to be in the area of dating. In response to the statement, "I would feel uncomfortable if one of my children decided to date someone of another race," whites and blacks answered quite differently. Of the white respondents, 50 percent agreed with this statement, compared with only 20 percent of the black respondents. In a similar way, half of the black respondents "strongly disagreed," compared to just 15 percent of the whites who gave this response.

However, both blacks and whites within the congregation are more open to talking about racial issues. This was particularly true of blacks, who appeared to be much more willing to dialogue on racial issues. While whites want to dialogue about racial issues, they are strongly opposed to this being presented from the pulpit, and prefer less confrontational settings. Blacks largely agreed with preaching against racism from the pulpit.

Interviews revealed an idealistic and optimistic approach to racial issues. Although people appeared to be open to talking about race, during the interviews both whites and blacks seemed to avoid talking about sensitive *racism* issues like existing prejudice in the congregation and the legacy of apartheid. One questions whether the congregation is as ready to talk about the difficult area of race relations as they think they are.

Figure 33: Umbilo Church: Too Much Time Spent Talking About Race and Racism



7.2.4 Identity and Mission

Within the congregation there is some tension over the mission of the church. Although 72 percent of the respondents felt that they could strongly identify with the mission of the church (on a day when a quarter of the respondents were infrequent visitors), there is no clear understanding of what that mission might be. At the time, no mission statement even existed in the congregation.

Mission was evaluated through idealised programming and activities. Since these reflect what congregants expect the church to do, they are symptomatic of mission objectives that individual attendees embrace. Interviews revealed very similar results to the survey, although very few congregants seemed to have strong views on where the church should go.

When asked to rate a number of activities of the church according to the scale, "Needs to Give More Emphasis," "Generally Satisfied," and "Receives Too Much Emphasis," the results suggested both commonality and divergence between the races. For the sake of comparison, the results are given below and prioritized according to the number of responses which indicated the need for greater emphasis in a particular area.[72]

[72] The number of respondents significantly declined in this particular section of the survey (almost 20 percent). Two reasons are likely for this: (a) the number of visitors present in the congregation who did not know much about the church, and (b) the slow rate at which older white members filled in the survey, so that some did not finish the survey by the time it was collected.

Figure 34: Umbilo Church: Racial Analysis of Church Activities Needed

Blacks	**45**	**Whites**	**31**
Evangelistic crusades	30	Training to do personal witnessing	25
Visitation and counselling	29	Visitation and counselling	20
Sabbath afternoon programs	28	Bible study and Bible seminars	18
Training to do personal witnessing	27	Evangelistic crusades	17
Welfare projects	22	Welfare projects	17
Bible study and Bible seminars	18	Social events	13
Social events	14	Sabbath afternoon programs	7

A few important insights emerge from this data. Firstly, among both blacks and whites there is obviously a perceived need for greater evangelistic thrust. The majority of respondents felt some need for increased public and personal evangelism. However, much like the other churches in this study, the blacks tended to favour public evangelism, while the whites tended to favour personal evangelism. When asked which one task the church should focus on for next year, the highest response from whites was in the area of personal evangelism. For blacks, it was in doing more public evangelism.

Neither group saw Umbilo as a soul-winning church. In a separate survey question, congregants were asked to respond to the statement that Umbilo is a soul-winning church. Slightly less than a third of the respondents could agree with this statement, even though it is seen as a needed priority by the congregation.

Evangelism was clearly rated more highly than welfare projects in the community. However, from the interviews this appears to have been because the members feel that this is adequately covered by the process that they have in place for welfare needs. Also, the church is probably somewhat isolated from the needs of the community. Apart from a few refugees attending the congregation, most in the congregation are employed, are full-time students or are retired. Thus, very few genuinely unemployed welfare cases are to be found at Umbilo. The congregation, not coming into contact with this need in its own community, tends to see it as an external problem.

The second finding is that increased emphasis on social events was not considered highly important by either blacks or whites. This finding is consistent with the surveys done in other congregations in this study. While there is still a small group in the church who would like more social events the majority do not see this as a priority. Umbilo, like other multiracial congregations, has "cliques" in the church that have found their social needs largely met outside of church programs and structures.

However, the most significant divergence in opinion regarding social events was with regard to Sabbath afternoon programs. Blacks rated the need to give this emphasis almost as highly as the need for

evangelism, but very few whites saw the need for greater emphasis in this area. This was in spite of the fact that Umbilo was running a regular Sabbath afternoon program that had initially attracted a large number of whites, but was now mainly attracting black members. Whites explained their reasons for not attending Sabbath afternoon programs by referencing the time it took to get to the church and the fact that they didn't want to spend the whole day at church. Once again, this seems to be an indication of a primary difference between "community-oriented" cultures and "individuality-oriented" cultures.

7.2.5 Identity and Reasons for Attending

In general, whites and blacks indicated very similar responses for the reasons why they attended Umbilo. Nearly two-thirds indicated that it was because they felt comfortable at Umbilo. Over 50 percent, mostly whites but with a significant number of blacks, said that it was because the services were in English. About 50 percent, almost equally divided between blacks and whites, said that it was because they enjoyed the pastoral leadership of the church.

However, beyond these strong mutual reasons, differences began to emerge. More blacks than whites indicated that they attended Umbilo because of its multicultural mix (24 blacks to 16 whites) perhaps showing that blacks at Umbilo were more likely to be attracted to a racially mixed church than whites were (but also related to the fact that many of the whites who attend Umbilo started attending before it became racially mixed). Whites were more likely than blacks to be attending Umbilo because they had friends in the congregation (25 whites to 16 blacks) or because they had simply been there a long time (20 whites to 7 blacks). About 40 percent of almost equal numbers of blacks and whites indicated that they attended because it was close to their home.[73] Less than a third said that they attended Umbilo because they liked the mission of the church or because of the youth and children's departments.

People see Umbilo as warm and friendly and a place where other races feel welcome (over two-thirds indicated this). Interviews reflected the same warm, positive attitude. Most of those surveyed said that Umbilo had an attractive worship style and that it reflected "my kind of people" (although interviews with the black students indicated a subgroup who disagreed with this statement). Thus, Umbilo seems to be generally attractive to its members, and the issue of race does not appear to dominate discussions and issues in the church, even though it remains a strong background theme.

It is apparent that most people in the congregation have found some level of welcome that attracts them to the church. Thus, the power of attraction to Umbilo for different cultures may be precisely because it has an ambiguous identity that can be adjusted to diverse needs. However, as the pendulum begins to swing towards a stronger black culture, it remains to be seen whether or not this attraction will remain for white

[73] This would concur with the fact that 55 percent of the respondents said that they lived more than 15 minutes away from the church.

members. Racial issues have not become a divisive focus in the church, and a number of those who attend see it as one of Umbilo's attractive features.

The gravest concern is that mission is not a driving force in the congregation. As racial changes continue to disrupt the status quo, the current harmony among whites and blacks may disintegrate, and whites may leave. From interviews, it seemed that racial reconciliation had only been partially achieved. The lack of tension among the races is clearly not evidence of a common vision and mission.

7.2.6 Identity: Conclusions

An examination of the identity of Umbilo suggests that this once all-white influential church has undergone rapid and significant racial change that has impacted on its identity. Through this transition, racial attitudes have remained fairly positive, and most people appear to feel at home at Umbilo Church. The "multicultural" mixing in the group appears to have been limited to (largely) a select group of middle-aged whites and blacks who shared similar cultural interests. Over the last few years, there has been rapid racial change in the congregation as whites have exited and larger numbers of blacks have started attending. The social mixing of blacks and whites has become more limited. Many whites predict that the congregation will become increasingly black. However, large numbers of blacks have not committed to the church in either moving their membership or returning their tithe to the church. Some black sub-groups have still not been integrated into the church, even though they may have attended for some time.

The future of the church thus revolves around how blacks will be integrated into the church structure. If such integration continues to allow cultural space while achieving a common vision and promoting reconciliation, then Umbilo is likely to have a bright and rainbow future to it. However, the vague nature of the congregation's mission and the lack of substantive racial reconciliation are dangerous signs in an otherwise healthy church. Ways must be sought to reach out to and effectively harness the new attendees, integrating them into existing social circles while not aiming for mere assimilation.

7.3 PROCESS

Leadership at Umbilo largely revolves around the pastor, although the elders often play a significant role, and ultimate authority resides in the church board.

On the whole, pastoral leadership is very positively viewed at Umbilo. During the interviews, very few had any negative comments about the current pastor's leadership and his ability to deal with issues. From a cultural perspective, the pastor was seen as very fair in dealing with racial issues, and accepting of other races.

In the discussion that follows, specific attention will be paid to how cultural issues have both impacted and been impacted by significant issues working themselves out in the church.

7.3.1 Women's Ordination

Women's ordination is not a current issue (although a minority still feel strongly opposed to it, and there are currently no women elders). Nevertheless, the difficulties with implementing women elders showed some of the dynamics within the congregation.

The move for women elders was initially proposed by Pastor Nunes in the early nineties. At that time, this was a fairly novel concept for the church, although other Adventist churches in South Africa had had women elders for some time.[74] Nunes faced tremendous opposition over his proposal, and the matter was eventually referred from the nominating committee to the church board, and ultimately to a church business meeting (an open meeting for all church members). After a heated debate, the church agreed to move ahead with women elders, but the ladies nominated chose not to accept the positions after hearing the discussion and feeling caught in the middle of a politicized situation.

This incident helps to highlight the leadership processes in the formerly "white" church. Although the pastor had considerable authority, the elders and leaders were ultimately able to defeat "progressive" attempts by the pastor to bring in "gender equality." Since pastors are generally more transitory than elders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa, they tend to have a power base bestowed by authority rather than by member confidence. If a pastor in this situation were to attempt change too suddenly (as it appears Nunes did), then sometimes this process could backfire and create permanent schism in the congregation.

This struggle to accept women elders led Nunes to bring in elders who were "more accepting in nature" and "better equipped to deal with people" (Interview 27). As a result of this process, there was a shift in congregational leadership. Nunes attributes the success of the congregation in dealing with cultural change to the focus he placed on interpersonal relations within the church (see earlier section). He argues that because the congregational leadership was generally accepting of others and good in their interpersonal skills, they were enabled to welcome other races.

7.3.2 Music and Worship

Music is a more contemporary issue that has come to the fore in the congregation. A particular incident illustrates the complex dynamics operating in the congregation. It appears that the incident was sparked during a campmeeting. There was a testimony service with music items at the end of the testimonies.

[74] For instance, Helderberg College SDA Church started having women elders in the 1980s. The SDA Church Manual allows for the ordination of women as elders, provided there is Division agreement on this policy.

One of the popular black speakers began playing a song on his harmonica, and while he was doing so, one of the white Umbilo members who is professor and considers himself well-educated in the area of music began putting words up on a screen. "They said that rock and roll should not be used in the church, and many of the blacks got very upset," said one church member (Interview 8).

This incident was followed by a music seminar in the Umbilo Church by the same white professor and his wife. At the seminar, it was explained that rock and roll music had originated in Africa. One of the older white members described her version of the experience. "Jannie (not his real name) is very Afrikaans. He was really trying to address the issue of young people and music and how they might think they are innocently listening to music, but that they are influenced by the ideology of the musicians… In trying to show the history of music he referred to the 'black this' and the 'black that' and kept calling them pagan. One of the black members got up and asked, 'What's all this black, black business about?'" (Interview 5) The point of discussion appeared to be the use of the drum and its rhythm as originating from Africa.

Most discussions like these do not go to the church board, which rarely gets involved in such issues. In fact, it appears that incidents like these have been left to simmer, with people being free to choose sides. It seemed that church leaders had a number of different opinions on the issue, although most tended to be conservative. The issue was next brought up in a website discussion by the church's website master, who was in favour of more contemporary music. Throughout this process, there was never any attempt to resolve this issue at a more formal level.

As a result, the music issue still impacts on the church. Almost all of the interviewees indicated that they thought it was an important conflict in the church, and one that had cultural implications. For instance, the church has a music roster that indicates who will lead the song service and who will sing special music. However, since some of the black members sometimes arrive late, by the time they get there, someone else has been put in their place on the roster. The head of the music department (who has fairly conservative tastes) will not allow any "spontaneous" music items. Some of the blacks in the church find this hard to understand. "There may be a very good team of musicians who come to visit us but they are not given a chance [to sing] because they are not on the schedule. We are much more flexible in the churches we come from" (Interview 26).

The black students found the worship service very formal. They stated that they preferred *a capella* singing because when the piano is used, "people stop singing." They wanted more vernacular choruses and a change in the doxology, but were accepting of the fact that it was not likely to happen. "We need more music and to introduce different languages, but they tell us we can only pray in English" (Interview 26). It was not clear how this issue could be handled in the congregation.

Some of the whites thoroughly enjoyed the vibrancy of the black song service leaders, but others found them irritating and off-key. This background "gossip" would occasionally erupt into open remarks, but normally did not seem to affect the basic operations of the church. There appears to be tolerance (or opinions) instead of discussion of differences in worship styles.

Innovations in the worship service, however, do attract fairly severe criticism from the older white constituency. When Pastor Reynecke tried to introduce a new way of doing communion, many of the older members grumbled and complained. Again, the issue was primarily cultural, since congregants were asked to share their communion bread and wine with each other. One older lady complained, "I wasn't there, but my friends told me about it and they didn't think it was right. You didn't know whose hands were clean and whose hands were dirty" (Interview 3). However, these complaints never reached the church board (probably because there is little representation of the older group on the church board). The pastor was able to deal with the issue personally, but it does not appear to have been fully resolved.

Some in the church (particularly whites) definitely have an agenda for the worship style of the church. "We're introducing a worship culture in this church…. We try to get reverence and holiness in worship as a habit. We want it to be it to be friendly but not dour. We're very strict in the way we do things" (Interview 1). "This isn't about a white or black culture. Pagan music is pagan whether it's black or white. We want to have a worship culture here that leads people to reverence, dignity before God shown in formality in dress, time-keeping and order" (Interview 4). At Umbilo, a number of interviewees explained, you won't find people engaging in loud clapping and dancing in the aisles because that wouldn't be tolerated.

There appeared to have been no official discussion of this policy publicly. The worship culture was somewhat intangible, and the leadership processes that had set it in place were a complex play of internal politics and strong personalities. The difficulty of dealing with the cultural aspect of worship has not been fully resolved. Some blacks feel that their culture is being ignored, while some whites feel that there is a single worship style that is both biblical and transcultural.

7.3.3 Reverence in the Sanctuary

Connected with worship issues in the church are the underlying currents with regard to reverence in the sanctuary. Of course, this is not just a black versus white issue. Some of the older members feel very strongly about the fact that church services should be quiet and subdued, with very little talking or noise. They feel uncomfortable with being greeted enthusiastically at the door or with hearing loud conversations in the sanctuary. Some of the middle-aged whites are, in contrast, proud of this particular part of Umbilo. They express approval for hugging at the door, greeting each other in church and a hubbub in the sanctuary.

7.3.4 Children and the Church

Beyond these age issues there appeared to be a general concern from a number of whites that black children do not behave appropriately in church. One white leader lamented, "Black children don't seem to be controlled—they run wild" (Interview 13). It appears that black children often sit by themselves, and there may be talking or giggling during the church services. Whites often seem paralyzed in how to deal with children of a different culture, since they didn't know what is considered acceptable discipline, and they wish the parents would step in and do something. Older members are very frustrated with the children. "They are in and out the whole time. They must sit and behave properly. It's not just that we want them to have a white culture. It's a heavenly culture—to be concerned with your fellow man—and not to do anything that will distract from the worship of your neighbour" (Interview 8).

This issue is further exacerbated when church property is discussed. Since the church is often left open on Sabbath afternoons, the children have a "free hand." Established white church members feel that the church is deteriorating. "Blacks don't realize that you've got to appreciate and look after the church. They are all very happy to come and worship at the church, but they don't realize that it came at a cost" (Interview 13). Whites complain of pianos being abused, doors broken, white boards being written on, and of kids hanging on the curtains and climbing onto the roof.

Perhaps this problem has occurred precisely as a result of two different cultural perspectives operating in the congregation. From the black perspective, the community as a whole is responsible for raising children. From a white perspective, this obligation rests primarily on parents.[75] As a result, whites are increasingly frustrated by the lack of parental discipline from black parents, who in turn are frustrated that the congregation doesn't do more to help manage the kids. However, even when whites do attempt to discipline black children, it is clear that they are not sure how to do this without making a "racial incident."

7.3.5 Other Cultural Issues

Cultural issues are not limited to the children. Some of the more established white members complain that when they leave books in their seats to reserve them, they will come back and find their books moved and a black member sitting there. One older white lady described how she felt embarrassed by a mother breastfeeding her child in church. "I asked her to take the child to the mothers' room. She smiled sweetly

[75] Charles Foster comments on this point in referring to a particular multiethnic church where, "tension existed between those who assumed parents had primary responsibility for the behavior of their children and those who assumed that the responsibility for the behavior of the children belonged to the adult who was closest to them" (1996:53).

but did nothing about it. It happened a second time and she finally went. I spoke to one of my friends about it and she thought it was just disgusting" (Interview 8).

Time is an issue that was also mentioned frequently. "Blacks tend to arrive late even when they have a responsibility," one member lamented, "and we have to find someone else to lead out."

Of course, each of these issues can be explained by understanding cultural expectations. Since many blacks come from a more communal culture, the thought of having a "reserved" seat is foreign to them. Whites also perhaps have unrealistic expectations in thinking that other cultures will know that books on a seat mean that it is reserved for someone else. Breastfeeding in public is fairly common in black cultures, but unusual in white South African cultures.

In the black culture, time is less important than the event itself. Since many blacks have grown up having very little control of their circumstances and have had to depend on public transport to get to church, it is assumed that it will be understood if they cannot make it to church on time. In any case, as both whites and blacks note, blacks tend to stay at church for the whole day. This event-oriented culture is not fully understood by whites who want to run things "by the clock."

A particular example of this comes from a highly cultural event—the wedding. Whites marvel at how black weddings can sometimes start hours late, and will then continue for the whole day. Some whites get frustrated with how long things take, and have consequently stopped attending black weddings. Some blacks are frustrated with what they perceive as white rigidity when it comes to promptness and scheduling. Other blacks admire how "organized" Umbilo is.

On the other hand, a few of the professional blacks will lament that whites are too easy on black issues because they allow culture to be used as an excuse for bad behaviour. They feel that some blacks use "culture" as an excuse to do what they want, and whites are afraid to say anything in case they get charged as being racist.

Most of these issues are not dealt with by the leadership of Umbilo. They tend to come up in conversations and in isolated incidents, but are not handled at an official level. Many seem to have the attitude that these are small petty issues, and that they are not worth the hassle of formal dialogue. In some respects, this policy of not dealing with cultural issues appears to have worked. People have learned to accept, to some extent, the cultural differences of others. However, it may also be backfiring, as unresolved cultural issues continue to fester in the congregation.

7.3.6 External Forces and Congregational Processes

In general, Umbilo remains fairly autonomous in its local services, events and structure, disregarding external forces. Guest speakers from the conference will sometimes preach at the church. Since the leadership at the conference is predominantly black, this has been an adjustment for the whites. However, many whites note that they enjoy the black preachers, although "some of them, including the Conference president, seem to have a chip on their shoulder" (Interview 1).

The Conference has not attempted to press any kind of racial change agenda on the church, and is proud of the fact that Umbilo is known as a strong multiracial church. Even those blacks who do not attend Umbilo point out that it is evidence of the fact that "blacks and whites can get along together."

7.3.7 Strategic Thinking and Congregational Processes

In order to help uncover the congregational processes, the researcher attended a church board and also led out in a leadership activity and discussion. Following a model outlined by Thomas Groome (see Chapter Three), the church board looked at the Adventist story, its current practice and its vision for the future. Members of the board worked in groups of three, discussing and writing down their responses. These responses were then shared with the larger group.

7.3.8 Comparing with the Adventist Story/Heritage

Church leadership saw the congregation as living out its Adventist heritage in four particular areas: (a) simple and orthodox (but not too formal) worship, (b) a Bible-based message that included lifestyle reform such as modesty in dress, (c) warmth and caring for others irrespective of race, and (d) spirituality (largely inspired by incoming blacks). Thus, Adventism was seen as primarily impacting the congregation in terms of its lifestyle and practice. The leaders considered the congregation to be "conservative" and tied closely to Adventist beliefs, "but not in a constrictive way."

In considering ways in which the congregation did not reflect its Adventist heritage, many of the leaders felt that evangelism was not given sufficient priority. Early Adventism had a strong evangelistic emphasis, and many felt that this was lacking in Umbilo. They also indicated a need for more Bible study and greater spirituality, and white leaders felt that they needed to become more like the black members in this regard. Some leaders feared that culture would be used as an excuse to lead them into worship styles which were against the practice and theology of Adventists. "We need a heavenly culture," one leader stated, "one that transcends differences." There was a feeling that the Adventist heritage also had an "Adventist culture."

7.3.9 Examining Current Practice

Leaders were asked to describe the church, its program and its processes. In addition they were asked to identify the needs of various groups within the church. We will examine their answers and then compare these answers given in the congregational survey (where respondents were asked to list strengths and weakness of the congregation). In dealing with current practice, the discussions were aimed at eliciting descriptive answers and not necessarily prescriptive ones.

The two common words used to describe Umbilo by its leaders were "warm and friendly." These seemed to be the first words that came to mind when asked to describe their congregation. Most respondents in the survey indicated the warmth, love and hospitality that they have found at Umbilo. However, there were a few who felt that "as a visitor, one can feel out of place." This minority aside, most people in the congregation felt that Umbilo's outstanding identity comes from its warm and friendly atmosphere.

The second characteristic that the church board said described Umbilo was its diversity. This was also mentioned in the surveys as a notable strength of Umbilo's. However, there were cautions sounded. Some in the surveys remarked that there was "poor socializing among people of different races," another that "whites sat in one place and blacks in another," and that members were sometimes "naïve of other people's needs."

The leaders also discussed the perception by some that the church was in the wrong location and dislocated from their community. "We're not really a community church, and most of us have to travel some distance to get to the church." However, the leaders felt that they should remain in their present location, even if they did not articulate very clearly why they felt that was necessary. (It seemed to arise more out of pragmatics than out of mission.)

In a discussion of the church's programs, it became apparent that a high emphasis was placed on Sabbath morning Bible study classes and the main church service as integral to the church's identity and open to all races. However, outside of these services, the leadership acknowledged that attendance tended to be racially based, with church lunches and Sabbath afternoon programs being mainly black, and cell groups and non-Sabbath-related social events (such as volleyball games) being mainly white.

Church processes were described as being driven by the church board, although the pastor had a significant voice. However, when issues arise, departmental leaders are expected to try and deal with them first. The leaders also mentioned that some issues never do make it to the board, and that people tend to "grumble" but not seek any action to deal with their complaints.

The board then looked at the different subgroups in the church and attempted to identify their needs. The older whites were seen to need stability and order (reverence) in the church services, as well as recognition and visitation from members. The middle-aged whites' needs focussed around family and meaningful participation in the services. The white youth were seen as needing involvement, support, and provision of a variety of activities. Most of the leaders did not seem to know what the black students needed, except for transport. Children in the church needed greater care and programming. Refugees need help with their social needs and with finding jobs.

7.3.10 Casting a Vision

Board members were then asked to describe their ideal picture of the congregation, and to discuss strategies for implementing this vision in the congregation. There were a wide variety of responses, suggesting (like Sandton) that there was a lack of common vision and mission.

However, three common elements did start to emerge out of this discussion. The first was that the church should be evangelistic (even though this was defined in different ways). The ideal church would be a growing church. Secondly, board members felt that the ideal church would be a loving church in which there was respect and equality for people from all races. Some members particularly mentioned that they would like to see a church that was free from criticism, and where everybody got along. The third element involved active but godly worship. They saw the ideal church as one in which members enjoyed getting together to sing and worship in biblically appropriate ways (although there was a difference of opinion on what this meant). This would then flow over in active service for others.

However, when it came to trying to "give feet" to this vision in the local congregation, the board members were unsure of how to change the status quo. The tension between vision and practice seemed to resolve squarely in favour of the latter. Although several ideas were discussed in terms of the three elements given above, no one seemed to know for sure how to begin practically implementing any of the suggestions.

7.3.11 Conclusions

The strategic planning with the church board suggests that the board had a fairly good understanding of those attending on a Sabbath morning (outside of the student group) when their answers were compared with the congregational survey. However, the board appeared to be more bound by its current practice and existing story than open to a vision of a new future. The lack of a common mission or vision means that the congregation is more connected through its Sabbath morning program than through any other factor. Leadership processes in the congregation do not appear to have helped the congregation develop a new narrative or transforming vision.

7.4 PROGRAM

Umbilo has a wide variety of programs, but as we have noted already, the Sabbath morning programs are primary to the congregation's activities, with limited attendance outside of these services.

7.4.1 Sabbath Morning Services

The most significant part of Umbilo's program revolves around the Sabbath morning services. Observations on these services are taken from the researcher's attendance at the church during July and September, 2001.

The first part of the service begins at 9:15 a.m. with a preliminary Sabbath School program. This is mainly attended by the "core group" of the church (which is largely white). As one walks into the church, there are greeters at the door who warmly welcome. One particular man in the congregation will often envelop those coming into the church with a large hug.

Initially, a few people will greet each other and there will be a little "buzz" in the church until song service starts. This section of the Sabbath School program appears to be somewhat informal. The person up front greets people warmly and spends some time establishing a rapport. A variety of programs will be presented, but this appears to be largely driven by who happens to be the Sabbath School Superintendent for that year.

At 9:50, the main part of the Sabbath School begins, with people dividing into Sabbath School lesson discussion groups. The church has four adult classes, one baptismal class, one youth class and three children's division classes.

All the classes (except the baptismal class) use standard Sabbath School materials provided by the SDA denominational publishing house.

Road noise is particularly noticeable during the classes, as no microphones are used during this time. This can make it hard to hear the comments made by class members, although the teachers are generally well heard. There are three classes in the sanctuary, adding to the noise factor and the difficulty of hearing.

The class on the front left-hand side is made up of mainly older white people predominantly in their fifties and sixties. People in the class seem to have known each other for a long time. The class begins with a sharing of prayer requests, and there is obviously a sense of intimacy and humour between the members of this class. The questions and answers are at times fairly simple, "What did Jesus do the night before his crucifixion?" with direct answers and advice such as, "If we want to have strength, we must pray

more." Once the prayer and sharing time is over, there is not much interaction from the group. The class is noticeably white, although a couple of older black people sit towards the back. The regular class teacher, Aubrey Els, is an older white male who has previously served as head elder of the congregation.

The class on the front right-hand side has a more mixed aged group, although most in the group are in their forties, with a couple of younger people present. The teaching approach is more didactic in nature, with each question leading to the next: "Who created the earth? God created it. Who owns the earth? God does. If he created the earth, surely he has an interest in it. So why would he abandon the earth?" The discussion seems a little more theoretical in nature. Sometimes colloquial answers are given in response to questions asked. Once the discussion gets underway, there is a fair amount of interaction from the class, although the discussion may ramble at times. The class is all white except for one Indian. Afrikaans is occasionally used. The regular class teacher is a middle-aged white man who is currently serving as an elder in the church.

At the back of the church, another adult class is much more mixed, both racially and in age. There are two older people, but the majority of the group is younger. The teacher has a very didactic approach in the class, but the class members laugh and interact spontaneously. There is sometimes the use of a white board, and the lesson is more clearly followed than in the other classes. The teacher often has done a lot of personal research. The class tends to respond more to the teacher's statements and questions instead of asking their own questions. Answers tend to be fairly well thought-through. This class has until recently been traditionally taught by Malone, a middle-aged black male who has served as an elder in the church.

Another adult class meets in the front vestry. This is led by Elsie Upton, a white woman in her sixties who has been a member of Umbilo for many years. Another group of twenty-five students meets in the back mothers' room. Although this is often taught by a white teacher, the black students participate enthusiastically. There is obviously camaraderie between the students, and they appear to know each other well. The questions are thought-provoking and the answers tend to biblical. Students interact fairly spontaneously.

The youth class meets in the fellowship hall. The group is made up of mainly teens and is racially mixed, although there are more whites than blacks. They are fairly quiet, and the teachers do most of the talking. There is a strong emphasis on relationships and practical Christianity. However, a conservative approach is noticeable, for although it's not about "sitting someone down and telling them that Jesus is coming on the clouds," it's your lifestyle that counts and that includes "not wearing jewellery and earrings." The black youth who are present appear to be somewhat affluent and "western" in both their dress and their talk.

There are three children's divisions. In Cradle Roll (roughly ages 0-2), most children are accompanied by their mothers. It was interesting to note that all the mothers of colour sat on the floor in front of the leaders, while the white mothers hovered in the background. There are about double the number of black children to white children in this department.

The next division is the Primary division, where once again there are a much larger number of blacks present. The class appears to be a little more unruly, with the teacher continually asking for the children to sit quietly or telling them, "While I'm talking you can't speak." Several children arrive after ten o'clock. (The class begins at 9:15.)

The last children's division is the Earliteen class. This class is for ages 10-12 (roughly). Most of the children are black. It is similar to the Primary division.

7.4.2 Sabbath Worship Service

At 11:00 a.m. everyone returns to the sanctuary for the worship service. The service is fairly traditional, although warm. People greet one another and sometimes hug each other before the beginning. Singing is meaningful, though not overly participatory. Announcements are given, followed by a call to worship (a song that is a prayer, that is repeated each week). This is followed by a short praise song (also repeated each week), an invocation, a scripture reading and two hymns. The offering follows, with a prayer after it. Next is the children's sermonette, one more hymn of praise or special song, and the sermon. At the close of the sermon is a hymn of response, followed by the benediction and a short congregational response hymn (also repeated each week).

What is noticeable about all of the Sabbath morning services at Umbilo is that the Bible has primary importance. Ritual functions as structure for the delivery of the word and music. Symbols are noticeably absent, and there is very little art or abstract design in the sanctuary.

7.4.3 Fellowship Lunch

Although not a program as such, the fellowship lunch is nevertheless an important part of the life at Umbilo. At one stage, the lunch functioned as an important social event in the life of the congregation, and served as a meeting place between the cultures. However, in the last few years the lunch has lost its attraction for most of the members. More and more black students started attending, and whites slowly stopped coming. Eventually, a few of the older black families took it on as a "missionary project" to help feed the black students every Sabbath.

The black students expressed their disappointment that the whites had stopped attending the fellowship lunch. Some saw racial reasons for this, but did not appear to harbour significant resentment.

Once a month, a general fellowship lunch is held that includes more than the students, but attendance is one again limited to largely black members and their families.

7.4.4 Afternoon Programs

Three significant Sabbath afternoon programs are generally held at Umbilo. One is a Pathfinder club that is made up of young blacks between the ages of 10 and 15. The club is consistent, although not extremely active (compared to other clubs in the area).

The second activity is an adult discussion forum. Initially quite successful in attracting members of both races (mainly because of the speakers invited), it soon became a largely black event. Numbers in the afternoon are drastically less than in the morning services.

The final activity is an occasional "vespers" service as the sun is setting. Seventh-day Adventists keep the Sabbath from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, following biblical tradition. Very few members attend this event, and it seems to be becoming more infrequent.

7.4.5 Other Social Events

The church occasionally has social events which are largely attended by whites. This may be because of the nature of the activities (volleyball, dinner evenings and games) which appeal more to the white culture than to the black culture. It may also be a problem of transport for some of the black attendees, since these events are held in the evenings and on Sundays.

7.4.6 Youth Programs

The youth group that meets outside of Sabbath morning services is generally quite small. The group is mainly made up of young white teens who know each other well and have grown up together. A few more westernized black youth sometimes attend, but the group remains very "white and western" in its approach. Attempts to involve black leadership in the youth program have not been successful. The youth group has also given up on attending regional planning committees that are largely black-oriented. They feel that this is not because they are "racist," but because these meetings are irrelevant to them.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This case study of the Umbilo Church has highlighted several factors important to our research task (uncovering and examining processes in churches in transition to heterogeneity). We examined the congregation according to four areas: history, identity, process and program.

We found that the history of Umbilo indicated that racial change initially went largely unnoticed. Other congregational issues preoccupied the congregation's time and energy. Immigrants that joined the congregation were either isolated (refugees) or assimilated (professionals) according to their socio-economic status and culture. Immigrants joined the congregation because they found it hospitable and understandable (compared to other local black churches). However, with time racial change became more noticeable. Integration began to take place as black members of ability and leadership moved into significant positions. Due to a number of sociological factors, white youth began to exit the church as local blacks started attending in greater numbers. Black students from the nearby campus started to attend more frequently, even though they were not officially a part of the congregation. Within the last five years, Umbilo has rapidly moved from being a majority white to being a majority black congregation.

Umbilo's identity is complex, because it reflects many strong subgroups, even though they all attend one worship service. There is an older white group which is largely retired, semi-educated and somewhat resistant to change. They seemed resigned to the new direction of the church, but are inclined to grumble about how things have changed from the way they used to be. Among the middle-aged group there appears to be some form of integration across racial barriers, although this is limited, especially since some of the immigrant members who were culturally similar to the whites have left. This group is generally optimistic about the future. The white youth are diminishing in numbers and appear ambivalent about the church and its future. The black students tend to be bored onlookers, appreciating some aspects of the church but still alienated from its core culture.

Most members describe the church as warm and friendly, a place where all races can feel welcome. It appears that attendees of all races generally agree with this assessment. There appear to be positive racial attitudes among both blacks and whites at Umbilo, and very few highly prejudiced people. However, this has not led to general integration, and church members generally sit, socialize and study in racially separate groups. The church also sees itself as conservative and biblically oriented, with black members having brought in greater spirituality. However, some whites and blacks find that the worship service is too controlled and stifling.

The biggest challenge with the church's identity is that there seems to be a lack of vision. Most people started attending the church because of its social value, not because of its theology or mission. Hence, if that social value should be threatened by changing faces, this could result in a rapid exodus of those who now strongly support Umbilo. The church also needs to encourage attendees to become members if it is to financially and spiritually survive the transition to heterogeneity.

Umbilo's identity is likely to be impacted on a continuing basis by growth patterns which suggest (younger) black growth and white decline. The exodus of young whites combined with black "flocking" (see chapter nine) may make it difficult to maintain Umbilo as a multicultural church.

Umbilo's processes are largely run through the church board. However, it is clear that many cultural issues are not dealt with at this level, but rather simmer at the membership level. Although many at Umbilo say that they want to deal with racial issues, actual interviews revealed that members shied away from sensitive areas of discussion, such as racism. Since whites prefer not to have racism dealt with from the pulpit, this limits the opportunities available for discussing racism and bringing about reconciliation.

Umbilo's Sabbath morning services are generally very mixed, and there seems to be an attitude of warm racial harmony. However, other programs in the church are more racially divided, allowing subgroups to meet and mix within largely racial boundaries.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *CASE STUDY OF THE BROOKLYN SDA CHURCH*

8.0 INTRODUCTION

The final church of this study was chosen for its success in handling racial transition. Although a small church, Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist Church is a congregation that seems to have very little racial antagonism, has maintained its racial ratios over several years and appears to have a warm and harmonious environment. As such, this congregation represents the potential available to similar small congregations who may be undergoing racial change.

It is important to note that the attempt here is to be mainly descriptive, and that any analysis given will be limited. Further analysis on all three congregations is given in Chapter Nine, and a theological response is given in Chapter Ten. Since Brooklyn is a smaller church, survey results were less significant. As a result, this chapter has a more "narrative" approach, telling the stories of the members as part of understanding the fabric of the congregation.

8.1 HISTORY

Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist Church is a small multiracial church in Brooklyn, Cape Town. Its current regularly attending membership of forty, plus usually twenty-five to forty visitors, make up the weekly Sabbath morning attendance, which fluctuates between fifty and eighty. Of its regularly attending adults, whites make up approximately 40 percent, blacks 35 percent, and coloureds 25 percent.[76] However, regular *membership* shows a much higher percentage of whites than any other colour.

8.1.1 Early History

Brooklyn Church opened its doors in 1964. Until that time, it had been renting a building in Maitland. Ironically, contextual racial developments allowed the Maitland group to move to Brooklyn. In 1964 the Group Areas Act (1950) was expanded to include coloureds in the Cape. Brooklyn suburb was forced to undergo a radical change. Previously a mixed area with whites and coloureds, Brooklyn was now declared a "white area," and the coloureds were forced to evacuate. This allowed poor whites to move into the unoccupied houses and churches.

The opportunity of obtaining a church building at a reasonable price was too good to pass by, and the Maitland group soon acquired a church hall from an evacuated coloured church. Even at that stage, Brooklyn was a much poorer socio-economic area than other suburbs in Cape Town. Most of those who came to Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist Church did so from disadvantaged homes in and

[76] This figure was obtained after taking the attendance at two Sabbath services and comparing this with interview information on regular attendance levels

around that area. Mowbray Seventh-day Adventist Church, a little further to the south and closer to the heart of Cape Town, drew the wealthier Adventists, but Brooklyn struggled along valiantly with a few members.

Brooklyn was a bilingual church in its early days (one week the service would be in English, and the next week in Afrikaans), and drew whites of both language groups. Their early hall had limited facilities, including an outhouse. Eventually, Brooklyn was able to buy a larger property next to theirs in order to build a new hall and church, but their small size and limited finances meant that it was almost fifteen years before the main church sanctuary was built.

In 1978, the new building was dedicated at a full service. For a moment, it seemed that Brooklyn was on the threshold of a new and promising future. However, the pastors assigned during that time were nearing retirement and often involved in other church projects. As a result, Brooklyn never got the evangelistic boost it needed, and membership started to dwindle. By 1985, the financial situation was so poor that the bank nearly foreclosed on the church building.

However, as new young families started coming to the Brooklyn Church, a vibrant youth group began, and the church stabilised and survived the 1980s. Several younger pastors brought renewed vibrancy and fervour to Brooklyn, even though they often divided their pastoral duties with at least one other church in the Cape Town area. By 1990, the church was paid off, the services were fairly full (about eighty attending) and Brooklyn was holding evangelistic meetings in the area. The hall was turned into a community services centre where thirty to forty members of the community came for lunches and assistance. The children's programs began reaching out to poorer children in the community, and a number of them were baptised. Unfortunately, the high turnover of pastors meant that advantage was not taken of this promising new growth. In the 1990s a total of seven pastors served the Brooklyn church.

8.1.2 History during Racial Change

During the early 1990s, the first colour change began at Brooklyn. A couple of coloured and racially mixed families started attending. In general, they were accepted with open arms. Members remember when an older black lady and her daughter started attending. They lived in a shack in a nearby squatter settlement. While most members had no problem with a black lady attending, there were a few negative reactions, such as "We're going to be taken over by the blacks." Most whites felt more comfortable with Silas Mabinda, a sophisticated black doctor who started attending Brooklyn and became an elder. The older black lady was hard of hearing and could not take on many duties, but her daughter became very involved in the church and helped start a small group that still meets in the squatter camp. She currently serves as the youth leader of Brooklyn (2004).

With constant pastoral change and lack of vision, by the mid-1990s the momentum for growth was lost, and Brooklyn began a serious decline in numbers. Many of the white youth immigrated or left the church. Renewed impetus was to come, however, at the end of the 1990s through new young people of colour attending Brooklyn and getting involved in the youth department. In particular, a new young professional coloured couple arrived at the church. Working together with the few black young people that they found there, they began building a (largely black) youth group that attracted other young people. Soon, the youth group was back up to eighteen members, all of them black or coloured.

An extensive youth and Pathfinder program brought new life to the church. A young black lady was made the Pathfinder leader. Some of the new young blacks would travel back to Brooklyn on weekends from over an hour away just to enjoy the fellowship that they found there. The church also started seeing an increase in the number of black foreigners who would search it out as an English-speaking church close to Cape Town. A number of these were refugees fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries. Local coloureds started attending as they were invited by family members who were now in leadership positions at Brooklyn. Slowly but surely, the cultural face of Brooklyn began to change.

How did the established white members at Brooklyn react to this change? The interviews indicated that they saw them very positively. There appeared to be no racial antagonism at Brooklyn, and all races felt that Brooklyn was warm, welcoming and unprejudiced. The only negative racial incident occurred in 2001. An older white lady who was a regular attendee but not a member started calling black people "kaffirs" in Sabbath School. Church members remonstrated with her, but eventually one day she created a scene by shouting protests when a black person attempted to sit next to her. At this point one of the elders (an older white man) firmly took her wheelchair, escorted her outside and told her to go home. The church board met on the matter and decided to send her a letter telling her not to attend the church unless she changed her attitude. Everyone in the church felt that this was an isolated incident linked to just one person. In talking to people about it, it was clear that no one agreed with her position.

Church members who were interviewed smiled in remembering how when the youth discovered she was racist, they would deliberately go and sit in her pew. Needless to say, this move had not made her react any more favourably toward them.

The different races at Brooklyn live quite peaceably together. There appears to be no jockeying for positions, no significant racial tension and no signs of fear and distrust that have been so obvious at

the other churches examined in this study. However, there is a recognition that the cultural face of Brooklyn is changing. Most of those interviewed saw Brooklyn as being more coloured and black in the future.

Even at the higher administrative levels, this was recognized. In 2002, Brooklyn received its first coloured pastor, a lady recently graduated from a theological course at Helderberg College. In 2003, she was replaced by a retired coloured pastor who continued the coloured leadership in the church. Reaction to having a coloured minister was minimal. Most members in the congregation saw it as inevitable.

What has been unusual in Brooklyn's case is that the rapid racial change seems to have reached a plateau. In the last three years (2002-2003), the racial percentage at Brooklyn has stabilized. The reasons for this are unclear, but it seems to be because there are other larger and more dynamic churches for people of other races to attend. Thus, Brooklyn is not currently threatened by fears of being swamped by new people of colour. It remains a comfortable and friendly church that exists a little out of the mainstream of the rush of life and commerce in busy Cape Town.

8.2 IDENTITY

Brooklyn's identity is much simpler than other churches in this study. This is partly because of its size and partly because of the people involved. Many of those who attend Brooklyn are "laid-back," down-to-earth Christians. They have a simple approach to Christianity and life. As a result, the culture of Brooklyn tends to be flexible, accepting of difference and less intense than other churches studied.

8.2.1 Overview

The following statistics, taken from the survey conducted at Brooklyn in November 2001, help us to gain a composite picture of Brooklyn Church.

Table 2: Brooklyn Church: Overall Analysis and Profile

Race

	No.	Percent
Black	11	24.4
Coloured	12	26.7
White	20	44.4
Unknown	2	4.4
TOTAL	45	100

Age

	No.	Percent
Under 21	7	15.6
21-40	13	28.9
41-60	13	28.9
60+	12	26.7
TOTAL	45	100

Education

	No.	Percent
High School	24	53.3
Matric	7	15.6
College Diploma	6	13.3
University Degree	4	8.9
Unknown	4	13.3
TOTAL	45	100

Employment

	No.	Percent
Retired	12	26.7
Unemployed	9	20.0
Student	4	8.9
Work Part-time	4	8.9
Work Full-time	15	33.3
Unknown	1	2.2
TOTAL	45	100

Language

	No.	Percent
English	30	66.7
Other South African	9	20.0
Afrikaans	4	8.9
Other Foreign	2	2.2
Unknown	1	2.2
TOTAL	45	100

Membership and Attendance

	No.	Percent
Member	31	68.9
Non-member	14	31.1
Regular Attendance	33	73.3
Infrequent Attend	10	22.2
Unknown	2	4.4

The above composition, when combined with actual attendance on a regular basis (as gathered from interviews and personal observation), suggests that Brooklyn is a diverse multi-racial church with significant numbers in each of the major age groups. It has a small working population with many of those attending having completed only part of their high school education.

8.2.2 Socio-Economic Status

A key component to understanding Brooklyn is an acknowledgment of its *socio-economic status*. As one drives into the parking lot at Brooklyn Church, one notices dusty dry ground and red brick buildings. The church is fairly attractive, but not well looked after. Loose trimmings hang from the walls, gutters need repairing, carpets need replacing, etc. The surrounding houses reflect the same dusty look and simple furnishings. There are a few exceptions among some of its members, but Brooklyn as a whole (both neighbourhood and church) is obviously of a lower economic class than most of the surrounding areas and congregations.

This has been a significant defining factor in the church. One of the members admitted, "If you stayed at Brooklyn, you were a poor white" (Interview 7). Brooklyn's identity is not defined by prestige, or program, but by comfort and friendliness. If you came to Brooklyn, it was because you were either located in the immediate area, or because you felt *comfortable* there.

8.2.3 Atmosphere

Like many churches from a lower socio-economic background, Brooklyn has developed a warm hospitality. Primary to Brooklyn's identity has been its *welcoming and warm atmosphere*. Over three-quarters of those surveyed listed this as their reason for coming to Brooklyn. Interviews revealed that those who made Brooklyn their home did so because they felt welcomed and accepted in the church. This was certainly the case for the current head elder, Basil Kashula.

Basil came from Gauteng in 1991. He says that he was looking for a smaller church with a family atmosphere. Basil first attended Goodwood Seventh-day Adventist Church, but found them "more traditional and less flexible." The first time he attended Brooklyn he found the church very friendly and more informal. "You have a good mix of friendly people here and it's a natural thing—they're naturally friendly." Over ten years later, he still believes that this is the prime characteristic of Brooklyn. "The church board have taken the leadership role to make this a friendly and approachable church. We make it a point to ask how we can make ourselves friendlier" (Interview 13).

An 89-year-old member agrees. She started attending Brooklyn in 1981 as a result of an evangelistic series. In her words, "Brooklyn has always been known as the friendly church…. They're very hospitable…and church members were always willing to pick me up and take me to church" (Interview 17).

Brooklyn's atmosphere, as Basil pointed out, is also more informal. This is somewhat surprising, because Brooklyn is filled with people from traditional backgrounds. There is something about their friendly, down-to-earth approach that makes them flexible with liturgical requirements. Basil will often lead out in services and meetings without a tie, and it is clear that services at Brooklyn are more relaxed and informal than at most of their sister churches.

The desire to be friendly and accepting has helped Brooklyn not only cope with racial differences, but theological differences as well. A variety of theological perspectives happily coexist without appearing to generate intense conflict. A friendly, accepting and somewhat phlegmatic approach to controversial areas means that they have not significantly affected the life of the church. When asked about conflict in the church, most older members refer back to a jewellery issue that arose during the time of Pastor Steven Murray, some fifteen years ago!

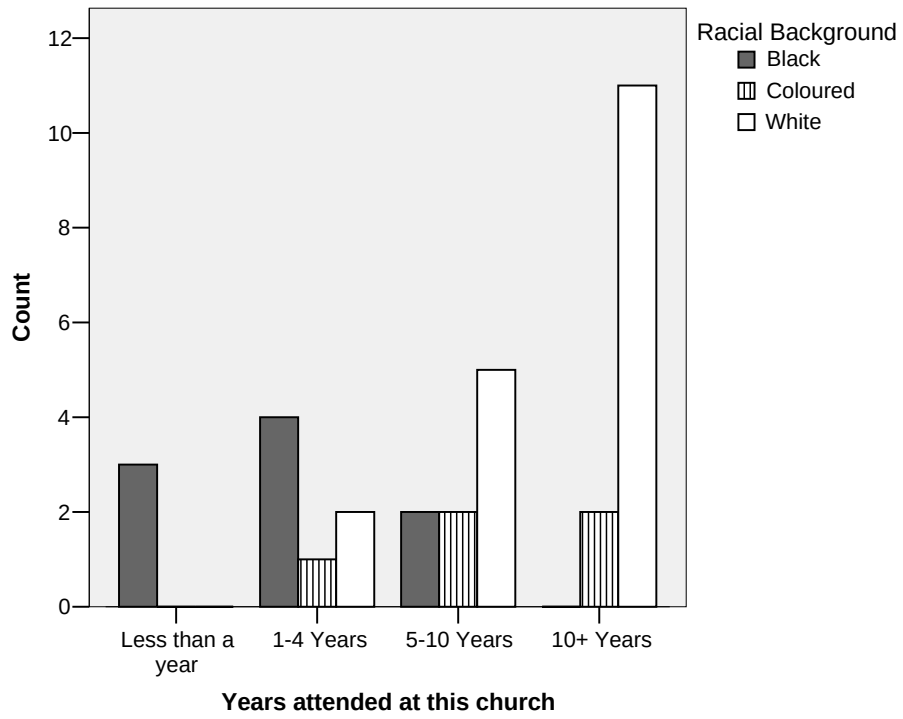
As head elder, Basil often leads out in Sabbath School Bible study lessons, and his comments generally reflect a "grace perspective." "People have got the wrong idea of God—they see God as a taskmaster…. God alone secures our salvation. He is merciful and gracious." A member here or there will sometimes dispute this, but when disagreements arise, no one seems too perturbed by the differences of opinion, even though there are some rather unique perspectives in the congregation. Each person lives out their own theological beliefs, and it appears that theology is more part of the *life* of the congregation than it is a part of their *thought patterns.*

In summary then, Brooklyn's identity is shaped by a warm hospitality rooted in a practical Christianity that seems unperturbed by diversity. This seems to be a key factor that has influenced Brooklyn's ability to handle racial differences.

8.2.4 Racial Identity

Brooklyn Church is made up of a group of largely older whites and coloureds and a growing number of young blacks (mostly students and refugees).

Figure 35: Brooklyn Church: Years Attended by Race



Brooklyn's identity has been allowed to develop without rapid change. The slow rate of racial chance has apparently been significant in its remaining multicultural. Change has been slow enough for existing whites not to be threatened by the incoming black and coloured attendees.

Whites still generally hold the major positions in the church (head elder, treasurer, church clerk, Sabbath School superintendent, head deacon, etc.). People of colour are welcomed, supported, given positions and encouraged to stay, but they have not fundamentally taken over major leadership roles. There is currently a coloured pastor, coloured elders and a black youth leader, but this has all happened gradually and without any antagonism.

This slow process has allowed Brooklyn to accept diversity without being threatened by it. In fact, most whites in the congregation accept that Brooklyn will eventually become a church dominated by people of colour, and they are, in general, unperturbed by this development. They feel comfortable with who they are and with what is happening in their church. Allowing their identity to gradually unfold has enabled the members of Brooklyn to accommodate racial change.

This has led to perhaps the most unique element of Brooklyn's identity, which is the complete lack of racial tension in the congregation (barring the incident mentioned earlier). Brooklyn's surprisingly good-natured approach to cross-cultural relations apparently stems from the cross-cultural heritage of its participants. Brooklyn's story is really a collection of stories indicating the value of growing up together in a racially mixed environment.

8.2.5 Brooklyn's Multiracial Heritage

Many of those who attend Brooklyn once grew up in multiracial neighbourhoods and schools. This has enabled them to be more accepting of racial change and tolerant of racial differences. In the following stories, taken from interviews with the church members, it becomes obvious how significantly past racial experiences have influenced current practice. In the interviews, those who had grown up with members of different races were far more accepting and tolerant of other races than those who had not. It was interesting to note that of the three churches interviewed, Brooklyn appeared to be the most willing to speak about racial issues.

Sue Kirsten is the church clerk of Brooklyn Church and the manager of its community services centre. She accepted Adventism as a child. Her grandmother was a Seventh-day Adventist, and Sue would often attend the Hugo Street Church in Elsiesriver/Goodwood. This was before apartheid impacted on the neighbourhood, so the church was a mixture of whites and coloureds. She felt at home with the different races there (Sue is white), and her own family lived in a wood and iron structure house and were part of a "blue-collar" and racially mixed neighbourhood. She remembers her father speaking politics in the house and belonging to the Progressive Party. Her husband (also white) tells a similar story. He grew up in District Six before apartheid changed its communal and multicultural face. He remembers playing street cricket and other sports with his coloured friends.

As a result of this multicultural background, Sue and Fred are able to adjust to their multicultural church. Their down-to-earth approach to life, combined with an empathetic heart for the values of others, has made them feel at home with different cultures. "We don't have a problem," says Fred. "I grew up with them and I know how they think."[77] When the first black people came in, Sue was very positive. "Our hearts were won over," she says of the older black lady and her daughter who started attending in the mid-1990s.

The same experience is true for the treasurer in the congregation. She went to an integrated Catholic school as a child. She relates that when the first black people started attending, there were a few rumbles from people who felt that the church was going to be taken over by the blacks. She, however, didn't have a problem. She felt that she got along well with the different cultures, and wasn't threatened by the thought that Brooklyn might become black and coloured. She grew up with people of colour, and feels that has helped her adjust to a multiracial congregation.

However, not everyone in the congregation has positive stories to tell of their multiracial interactions in the past. Some of the members at Brooklyn have had very negative experiences with racism, and part of the reason that they love Brooklyn is that they feel it is a church where one's racial background is not important.

The white head deacon has one of these stories of racial hostility to tell. He grew up in Switzerland in a small Catholic village. In the late seventies, he came to South Africa and met his wife, a coloured member of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. Obviously, this was a time of tremendous racial tension in the country, and he described how the two of them had a number of "bumps with the police." Once the riot police came to his home in Parow and told him not to send his child to the local white school. He sent his son to Ravensmead because of the apartheid laws, but the young Afrikaners would often follow him home and bully him. Eventually, the prejudice was too much for their family, and they decided to go overseas.

Financial reasons forced them to return to Cape Town a number of years later, but by then the racial face of South Africa had changed. In 1993, they starting attending Brooklyn and he immediately felt at home. The culture of the church was showing its first signs of mixing. Another racially mixed couple and a number of coloured members were already in attendance. He felt that there was no prejudice against his family from any members of the Brooklyn Church. This is part of the reason why he still feels at home there.

[77] The use of "them" and "they" still indicates that many whites in Brooklyn do see a racial distinction and categories of "us" and "them," but when this was used, it did not appear to be derogatory or demeaning.

Brooklyn also became a haven for two coloured converts who live in the Brooklyn area. They were the first coloureds to be baptized into the "white" Cape Conference. Walter has served in various positions at Brooklyn, including being youth leader, head deacon and elder. When they first moved to Brooklyn, it was an all-white suburb, and they received threatening letters from the local officials. However, within a year apartheid had come to an end, and they have watched the neighbourhood change over the last ten years as people of colour have moved in. Walter became an Adventist as a result of a Revelation Seminar by Garth Bainbridge, then the pastor of Brooklyn and Goodwood churches. He immediately felt accepted in Brooklyn Church. He feels that Brooklyn is a very multiracial and friendly church, and he prefers its culture to some of the coloured churches that he has known where people backbite and fight for positions.

Both of these representative stories indicate why some people have chosen Brooklyn. Its non-racial approach to church life has appealed to them and offered healing from a racially scarred past.

Of course, for some of those attending Brooklyn, positive or negative experiences from the past have not been a determining factor.

What each of these stories suggests is that Brooklyn Church is very comfortable with its racial identity, and that this is largely due to the kind of people who attend Brooklyn. Many grew up or once lived in racially mixed neighbourhoods. Some of them were wounded in the past by racism, but now they seek healing and appreciate the non-racial atmosphere of Brooklyn church. Most importantly, those who attend Brooklyn are open, friendly, and down-to-earth, and they handle racial change pragmatically. And, fortunately, racial change at Brooklyn has been slow, giving people time to adjust.

8.2.6 Racial Prejudice and Racial Interaction

In order to assess racial prejudice and interaction, the less direct approach of the survey was used, and these results were then compared with responses from interviews. Very few people would directly admit to being prejudiced, but they were more likely to do so in an anonymous survey.

In response to a number of statements to indicate prejudice, most whites reacted against the statements, with a significant group showing ambivalence and only a few agreeing with the statements. Those of colour showed even less prejudicial sentiment. According to the survey there were only two whites, one black and one coloured who harboured strong prejudicial sentiments.

There were even a few surprising reactions to cultural issues. For instance, in response to the statement: "I would like to use more vernacular ('black') choruses in the church," over 70 percent of the church was positive, including a large number of whites. However, the use of loud and expressive "Amens" in the

church had a very mixed reaction, with people of colour and some whites supporting it (55 percent) and with the remaining number ambivalent (20 percent) and with 25 percent (mostly white) not liking this form of worship expression.

Other cultural issues seem to generally be positively received. Children of other races were generally seen as quiet, although some older whites (7) said that they were sometimes noisy. There seems to be a fair amount of cultural interaction, with 62 percent saying that they spent a lot of their social time with people of other races. However, among the whites this figure was much lower, with about half of them showing uncertainty on this statement. Another positive indication of interaction is that 70 percent of the respondents said they invite people of other races into their homes, and only a few (4 whites, 2 blacks and 1 coloured) do not do this. Even more positive was the fact that 97 percent of those surveyed said that the church was welcoming of all races.

Some of the whites were ambivalent about moving (37 percent) if the church changes colour, but the majority are committed to the church. Some of the younger blacks feel that the older whites are "cliquey" and tend to associate mainly with their own friends. However, when asked whether it was prejudice or preference to be mainly with one's own racial grouping, over half replied that it was preference (57 percent), and there was a lot of ambivalence (25 percent) on this question, with some of those of colour feeling more strongly that it was prejudice.

Most people see the worship service as enjoyable and relevant to young people, although there was critique of some of the sermons. The church's social events are generally seen as inclusive (although some blacks and coloureds disagreed with this), and the leadership is generally seen as being inclusive too (67 percent agreed, and most of the rest were ambivalent). A clear majority have no problem with a pastor of a different race over the church (90 percent) or with women elders (80 percent).

In summary, members of Brooklyn, in general, have no significant prejudice against those of other races. There is a significant amount of racial interaction in people's homes, and almost everyone felt that the church was a positive environment for racial interaction. Even though whites hold most of the significant positions in the church, they demonstrated virtually no antagonism against having pastoral leadership of another race.

8.2.7 Identity and Belonging

The following responses are given as the major reasons for attending Brooklyn Church, as opposed to other churches in the area.

Figure 36: Brooklyn Church: Reasons for Attendance

I feel very comfortable here	71 percent
I like the multicultural mix of the church	67 percent
The church has good youth/children's departments	67 percent
The church is close to my home	60 percent
The church has services in English	56 percent
I have friends in the congregation	51 percent
I enjoy the pastoral leadership	47 percent
I like the mission of the church	47 percent
I have attended here for a long time	33 percent

Many of those interviewed said that proximity to the church had played a vital role in their choosing to attend Brooklyn, while others indicated they liked the friendliness and the relaxed atmosphere of the church. In the interviews, these two reasons were the predominant ones.

Most members interviewed had visited other churches, but preferred the atmosphere at Brooklyn. Some also felt that they had a key role to play at the church and could not simply desert their posts. In general, there was a fairly high commitment among the whites to the church, and a growing commitment among those of colour.

However, it seems most people have had to "find" the church on their own and not because of any active outreach on the church's part. Once there, however, they find the church very welcoming and friendly.

8.3 PROCESSES

We now turn to Brooklyn's processes. Who gives leadership to Brooklyn, and what happens when there is a crisis?

Traditionally, white Seventh-day Adventist churches have been heavily pastor-dependent. This was certainly true of Brooklyn's earlier years. Pastors dealt with all major issues, and often their ideas and opinions would mould the direction of the church. However, over the last fifteen years, this has begun to change. The main reason for this was the rapid turnover of pastors in this period.

More and more, the head elder and the board have become the predominant leadership force in the congregation. The church board is the final decision-making body at Brooklyn, and it deals with most church issues. Since this group is fairly relaxed and down-to-earth, pastors who have thrived at Brooklyn have been those that have been more laid-back and informal. Traditional, choleric and strong pastors have been less well-liked and accepted (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 14).

However, with the high pastoral turnover, there does appear to be a leadership vacuum at Brooklyn. There is no clear direction for Brooklyn's future, no real visioning process and no goals or objectives for what Brooklyn wants to achieve. Every new pastor who comes to Brooklyn brings a new vision, but ultimately finds that the *phlegmatic culture* of Brooklyn prevails. In any case, pastors have moved before their vision could take hold of the congregation.

This has been Brooklyn's strength as well as weakness. Brooklyn's laid-back approach to church life has enabled it to weather racial change and challenges. Difficulties were dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis and solved pragmatically.

It is this aspect of the very *culture* of Brooklyn that has helped them cope with racial transition. Even old and traditional members have coped better because of the positive ways in which difficulties with racial transition were handled. The 89-year-old lady mentioned earlier spoke of how the church pragmatically handled change. In one instance, at fellowship lunches, sometimes children of colour wanted to rush ahead of the adults to get their food, and church members felt that those who were older should go first. "We worked on it and came to a peaceful solution—we created a separate table for the children, and everyone was happy." "Oh yes," she admits, "sometimes the children were irreverent in church, but we just explained to them that this was God's house, and no one seemed to have problem with that" (Interview 17).

However, this very pragmatic approach means that Brooklyn has no clear way forward. They exist in the present and deal with problems "one day at a time." This has clearly impacted on the church's evangelistic strategies and its potential for growth. Most of those interviewed said that they had to "find" Brooklyn on their own. Unless Brooklyn becomes more proactive and visionary, it will probably not become a growing church.

What happens when a crisis occurs? In the case of the racial incident mentioned earlier, when an older white lady called black people "kaffirs" in church, there was swift (and once again pragmatic) action. One of the elders quickly took her outside and told her to go home. At a later date, the board then ratified this decision. However, this only occurred after years of dealing with an ongoing problem with this lady, and it took a strong incident to have her removed. In this case, as in many others, Brooklyn took a *laissez-faire* approach until pragmatic and urgent action was necessary.

In summary, then, Brooklyn's processes are largely determined by the church board (which includes departmental heads and all elders). Pastors have had a sporadic effect on Brooklyn due to their high turnover. The board's approach to crises reflects a pragmatic and laid-back approach that has on the

positive side enabled Brooklyn to cope with diversity and change, and on the negative side resulted in the lack of a cohesive vision, and consequently little proactive growth.

8.4 PROGRAM

Brooklyn has generally had three major components to its program. The most important component involves the Sabbath services. This is where the entire church comes together for worship.

8.4.1 Sabbath Services

Sabbath School begins at 9:30 on Saturday morning. There will normally be a small core group of about twenty to thirty people in attendance. There will be a period of singing, mostly informal and sometimes without accompaniment if a pianist is not available. Then a short program is presented by one of the Sabbath School superintendents (all lay people). This will generally involve a short talk and a story from the mission field, followed by an offering for missions and a prayer. The church then divides into three groups for Bible study. The adults remain in the main sanctuary, the youth meet in the hall and the younger children meet in a classroom. The church remains mixed in these services, although it is noticeable that no white youth are present.

At 11:00, the main service begins. By this time, the overall numbers have swelled to about fifty or sixty, since many people arrive late. Another informal song service is begun, which is mainly a mixture of choruses and hymns. People slowly find their seats, greeting each other as they do so. One of the elders will come in at the end of the song service and share announcements with the church. A final song leads into the main service, during which time there is a noticeable change to more formality. The preacher and leaders in the service enter at the front and kneel on the higher platform. The preacher then stands and offers prayer. A hymn is now sung (instead of choruses). However, this moment of formality passes, and the congregation soon reverts to its more natural and informal approach.

Often Basil Kashula or another elder will lead out in singing and taking testimonies. People share freely and tell stories of how God has led in their lives. Some of the stories are a little long-winded, but no one seems to mind. The congregation takes its time and will sometimes stop for prayer when a need is mentioned.

Following the praise and worship time, there will often be a children's story. Children come to the front of the church, and the preacher moves down from the higher platform to speak on the children's level. This story can take anywhere from five to fifteen minutes.

An offering is then collected, and once again a note of formality creeps back into the service, with the singing of a response. The congregation kneels for public prayer and a silence descends over the

sanctuary. Following the prayer, a hymn or special music is sung, and the preacher begins with his sermon.

Generally the sermon is approximately thirty to forty-five minutes, and no one seems to complain too much when the sermon goes over time. At the end of the service, another hymn is sung, and the pastor gives the closing benediction.

An overview of the church's Sabbath services reveals an interesting mixture of informality and traditional structures. As a heritage from previous pastors, choruses are freely used outside of the main service. However, once the main service formally begins, hymns predominate. This appears to have been a more recent development as people of colour, who are generally more traditional, have come into the church. Some of the people at the services dress very formally in suits, and some, like the head elder, do not wear ties.

Once the morning services end, there will sometimes be a "potluck" (fellowship) lunch at the church hall. Occasionally this will be followed by a Sabbath afternoon program, but these have had very sporadic attendance, and in most cases the church members are anxious to go home. Informal lunches happen at various members' houses, and some racial mixing will take place, but the extent of this appears to be limited.

8.4.2 Youth Programs

The second component of Brooklyn's program involves the youth. Outside the Sabbath morning services, the only group to get together on a regular basis is the young people. The "senior" youth involve mostly black people in their late teens and early twenties who meet every weekend and spend most of their time together. This group is fairly small (about fifteen to twenty in number) and highly bonded.

Activities that the youth get involved in include Pathfinders, beach outings, coffee bars, a Valentine's supper, visiting other churches, weeks of prayer, youth camps and game evenings. Obviously, for a small church, this is a very active program, and one that seems to have been successful in drawing other (largely black) youth to the church.

The youth sometimes get discouraged when the older white members do not attend their programs. A Valentine's supper that was held was poorly attended by the older members. Old members, on the other hand, explained their reluctance to travel at night. It was dangerous, they couldn't see well and they didn't want to travel when it was dark. Most white members are proud of their youth program, but feel no need to become integrally a part of it.

8.4.3 Community Services Program

The third component of Brooklyn's program involves the Adventist Community Services (ACS) Centre which operates on the Brooklyn Church property. Three times a week, poorer elderly members of the community come to the church for subsidized meals. The Centre also runs a "Meals on Wheels" program to distribute food in the local community. Sue Kirsten is in charge of this program and has had been in this position for over five years. This has resulted in a positive view of the church by the community, but has not really impacted on membership growth. Most of the elderly people who come to the ACS lunches will not become members of the church.

In many ways, the ACS program has no real impact on the church. It simply exists as an adjunct program run on the premises of Brooklyn Church. Funding for the program comes from the regional Adventist Community Services body.

8.4.4 Programs and Tasks

In the survey, the members were asked to rate which tasks of the church they felt the church needed to emphasise. The results are indicated below.

Figure 37: Brooklyn Church: Emphasis on Church Activities Needed

Evangelistic crusades and public evangelism	71 percent
Training to do personal witnessing	59 percent
Cell groups (mid-week and Sabbath School)	58 percent
Sabbath afternoon programs for church members	56 percent
Bible study and seminars on the Bible	53 percent
Visitation and counselling	46 percent
Welfare projects in the community	35 percent
Social events (e.g. lunches, games, etc.)	26 percent

The church has a high interest in public evangelism, but seems reluctant to get actively involved. Once again, the poor interest in social events seems to be a recurring factor in a multicultural church. It appears that people are happy to attend church, but do not want more "programs" to attend when they are not as socially integrated in the church. Older people often find it difficult to attend programs held at night and feel less "sociable" outside their homes.

In Brooklyn, the statistical difference between the races on these particular tasks was too small to be significant. It appears that most in the church are in agreement concerning the focus on evangelism.

8.4.5 Programs and Evangelism

About half of those who presently attend Brooklyn regularly became Seventh-day Adventists through an evangelistic series. Many of the established members at Brooklyn had some initial contact with Adventists through friends or family, but ultimately decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a result of an evangelistic effort (in Cape Town or elsewhere).

However, most evangelism was held outside of Brooklyn area proper, and as a result, not many converts from the surrounding area came to Brooklyn. Rather, those who moved to Brooklyn looked for a local Seventh-day Adventist church in the area to attend. Some of these whites later moved to different areas, but continued to attend Brooklyn Church.

Once or twice a decade, Brooklyn has held evangelistic meetings, but without much success. The church currently has no plans for future meetings. This is an interesting identity twist—why is there no interest in public evangelism, when so many at Brooklyn have come into the church through public evangelistic meetings? In other churches in this study, the reason is that they have been afraid that more growth means more colour. But in Brooklyn this is not the case, as the area surrounding Brooklyn is still predominantly white (but becoming more coloured).

The reason is actually quite simple. Brooklyn is an older church with few resources. The whites do not want to go out at night for meetings, and the church, in any case, does not have the financial means to hold a meeting. The new young people of colour are more evangelistically oriented, but they are of a very different culture than the neighbourhood that they want to evangelise, and they do not know where to begin.

8.5 COMPARISON WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Of the three churches in this study, Brooklyn showed the least signs of racial tension, prejudice or difficulty with cultural adaptation. What made Brooklyn different from the other churches? The following points (although not exhaustive) identify key areas that were helpful in Brooklyn's ability to adapt to cultural change in their church.

1. Many older white members in Brooklyn were exposed to multiculturalism by living in diverse, racially-mixed neighbourhoods during their early childhood.
2. Brooklyn is a poorer community, and this has resulted in less class distinctions and a greater socio-economic "commonality" among its members. Also, lower socio-economic groups tend to be less patronising and more accepting of other classes.

3. The church has generally had a fairly flexible structure and laid-back approach to issues. This has been both positive and negative, allowing the church to adapt to cultural issues, but also not providing much direction or vision in the midst of this change.
4. The church has fostered a deliberate "accepting" and welcoming approach, and this has resulted in a positive experience for people of colour when they first came to Brooklyn. (This welcoming culture has been present in all three churches.)
5. The board has been willing to draw lines on racially unacceptable behaviour, which has helped members feel that racism is something that will not be tolerated at Brooklyn.
6. Highly significant to the process at Brooklyn has been the slow pace of racial change among its attendees (as opposed to the more rapid change in the other churches). This has helped more established whites to not feel threatened by the influx of people of colour.
7. At Brooklyn, racial change was more apparent in younger age groups, and therefore had less impact on older people in the congregation. It was probably easier for the older whites to handle racial change when their particular social grouping in the church remained somewhat intact and unaffected by the new developments.
8. Within the surrounding community, the continuing predominance of whites in the immediate neighbourhood has meant that this community-based church is not likely to be threatened by the impact of sudden and rapid racial change.
9. Since Brooklyn is a small church, it has maintained much more of a "family atmosphere," which has resulted in a high degree of commitment from those who attend there.
10. Fortunately for Brooklyn, the new people of colour who started attending were seen very positively. This was because they were generally committed Christians who helped bring new life and vitality to the church. These new attendees were generally not racially antagonistic, and were willing to work with the older established whites instead of against them. (This reasoning has also held for Umbilo, but less so for Sandton.)
11. Following on the previous point, the leadership at Brooklyn did not feel threatened by new people of colour. In fact, the existing white leadership was open to cultural change and welcoming of pastors of colour. However, it is also true that the white leadership still has significant control in the church.
12. Existing white church members are not seriously thinking of leaving the church, even if it becomes black or coloured. This commitment has provided stability in the face of racial change.
13. Within the established members, no one seems to have felt, "This is my church. I started it and no one else should come here." Both Brooklyn and Umbilo benefited from being older churches that no longer had the "old guard" around to claim ownership.

The above brief synopsis provides a helpful overview of why Brooklyn has been able to weather cultural change successfully. However, in spite of this rosy picture, the congregation still sees itself as moving

inevitably toward becoming a congregation of colour. The reason for this pessimistic/realistic approach to its multiracial future is based both on the demographics of South Africa and Brooklyn's own lack of strategic growth. The researcher's own observation of this matter is that, given Brooklyn's immediate neighbourhood, it would be possible to maintain Brooklyn's multicultural dynamics if Brooklyn engaged in evangelistic and strategic growth under vision-directed leadership. Reaching out to the surrounding community would ensure a continued balance of whites and coloureds in the congregation.

8.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter was an in-depth case study of Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist Church as a small and harmonious multiracial congregation in a poorer economic suburb of Cape Town. Of the three churches examined in this study, Brooklyn had the least racial tension and the best long-term chance of maintaining its multiracial mix. A multitude of factors explain Brooklyn's success, but the key components seem to be the friendly and laid-back atmosphere of Brooklyn combined with the slow rate of racial change in the congregation.

Brooklyn demonstrates the ability of a small church to weather social change successfully, and demonstrates the value of a flexible and welcoming culture in a congregation undergoing racial change. Brooklyn's story speaks to the potential small congregations have for smoothly working through slow and limited racial change.

The simpler dynamics at Brooklyn required less social analysis. Since statistical analysis was less relevant due to the number of respondents in each racial grouping, the focus of this chapter was to tell the stories of Brooklyn and to uncover forces that have led to racial harmony and integration. However, integration, even at Brooklyn, has still been limited, with blacks and whites being fond of each other but not necessarily spending a lot of time together.

If Brooklyn is to become all that it should be, it will need to not only understand itself better, but also grow in its understanding of God's will for its future. In Chapters Nine and Ten, we will seek to analyse all three congregations with this objective in mind.

CHAPTER NINE: *SOCIOLOGICAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS*

9.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at the congregations from a sociological and anthropological perspective, assessing common challenges faced, analysing trends and formulating models of understanding. The chapter will be more descriptive than prescriptive, drawing from observations and intuitions arising from this research project. Insights will be related to existing studies and models of cultural interaction and transition.

9.1 A PHILOSOPHY OF INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION

Before we turn to the sociological/anthropological analysis of the congregations, it is important to establish our philosophical frame of reference.

The earliest studies of culture tended to be anthropological in nature—a missionary or explorer taking notes on the beliefs and customs that he had found in a new cultural grouping. With time, anthropological study became more sophisticated, less superficial and more precise. In terms of religious beliefs and culture, anthropologist Clifford Geertz has had the greatest impact on our understandings of how culture relates to the transcendent. Geertz wrote that culture is an unending series of layers, to be peeled back by the anthropologist as he seeks understanding of the deep meanings and values of cultural practices.

However, while Geertz's insights have been very helpful in understanding how particular cultures work, his anthropological philosophy does have significant drawbacks. First, as he himself admits, most anthropological insights are not generalisable. This means that each situation is so unique and complex that it is almost impossible to relate one's insights and models from one conceptual study to another place and time. Those who have applied Geertz's method to multicultural congregations have come to similar conclusions (see Foster and Brelsford 1996:xii). People may see something in "your story" to relate to "their story," but this is often the limit of the study's dual applicability.

In contrast, in this study, we will not limit ourselves to a strict anthropological stance that refuses generalisability based on a theory of cultural complexity. Rather, we will seek to both understand the deeper meanings embodied in the particular cultures and their interactions, and draw broader, more generalised sociological insights and comparisons. The reason for this is a simple philosophical assumption. Both a strict anthropological (every cultural group is extremely complex—the so-called *emic* approach) and a strict sociological view (there is a commonness across large groups of people that can be analysed and studied—the so-called *etic* approach) are limited. We must not be "either/or," but "both/and" in our approach to cultural studies. Though cultures are extremely complex, they share a common humanness with others. A narrative in a particular setting is unique to that setting, and yet it will still share common themes with other stories. This is because we share a common humanness with

others, and yet we remain individuals. We must see both elements of commonality and individuality together.

A second challenge with the strict anthropological approach is that it is best suited to a study of a definable and isolated cultural system. It is much harder to do studies on cultures undergoing transition, never mind two or more cultures interacting with and being challenged by each other.[78] While recognizing the unique particularities of each cultural interaction, broader sociological studies can bring helpful insights into the *process* of cultural interaction and change. Thus, general human processes are played out in unique circumstances in particular situations.

Of course, Geertz acknowledges this need when he discusses relating the particular to the universal. Our task here is not to critique Geertz, but to sense the broader need to combine anthropological analysis with sociological analysis.

A useful approach that approximates the philosophical understandings of this research project comes from Martin, Nakayama, and Flores (1998). They advocate a dialectical approach that emphasizes the processual, relational, and contradictory nature of intercultural communication and knowledge. The theory states that we must see the value of the different cultural disciplines and accept their assumptions simultaneously. Thus, reality is both external *and* internal; human behaviour is predictable *and* creative *and* changeable. They have identified six dialectics of intercultural communication (see Martin and Nakayama 2000:44-48).[79]

Until recently, much of the work on culture focussed on cross-cultural or intra-cultural studies instead of inter-cultural ones. The result of Edward T. Hall's work on implicit and non-verbal message in culture in the 1960s and 1970s generated an interest that resulted in a plethora of cross-cultural training programs. The main goal of these programs was to prepare a person to enter into a different culture abroad. These programs had also their impact on missiology, where a number of books were published dealing with cross-cultural concepts, theories and practice. (See Elmer 1993, Mayers 1974, Augsburger 1992, Hesselgrave 1978, Kraft 1979, etc.) However, as globalization and mass immigration have impacted on local communities, so the focus has shifted away from only dealing with cross-cultural approaches to developing diversity management approaches (Landis and Bhagat 1996, quoted by Martin and Nakayama 2000:49ff). A challenge with these approaches is that they tended to see cultural patterns as set, unchanging and unconnected to issues of gender, class, and history (Keesing 1994).

[78] In fact, very few "interpretive" studies of intercultural interaction have been done (see Martin and Nakayama 2000:39)

[79] These are the cultural-individual dialectic, the personal-contextual dialectic, the differences-similarities dialectic, the static-dynamic dialectic, the past-present/future dialectic and the privilege-disadvantage dialectic.

The particular approach of this dissertation is that it is important to recognize both the complexity of culture, individual processes and relations, *and* the need for simplified models, broad parallels and comparative analysis. It also takes the stance that culture is fluid and not static.

9.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CONGREGATIONS STUDIED

Although all three congregations that were studied share a certain amount of commonality (English, Seventh-day Adventist and located in a suburban area of South Africa), there were also a number of key differences. Sandton was definitely the most socially complex congregation of the three. Its larger numbers, economic diversity, two services, and the impact of traumatic events meant that it had multiple social and theological processes competing for attention. However, in spite of this assorted bombardment of social change, racial change seems to have impacted on this congregation more heavily than the other congregations studied. Demographically, there were also differences, with the area surrounding Sandton tending to be wealthier than that surrounding the other congregations.

Umbilo was simpler both in terms of numbers and diversity. The board was more centralized, and racial tensions not as apparent. Significant cultural challenges exist below the surface, although not with the same severity as at Sandton. The greatest challenge for Umbilo lies in the differing growth rates among the members' population groups, with whites slowly diminishing in numbers and blacks growing rapidly. The area surrounding Umbilo was a combination of retirement homes, a campus, and the growing city sprawl expanding to its doorstep. Umbilo's racial makeup has been significantly impacted by the close location of the University campus.

Brooklyn turned out to have the simplest social dynamics of the three congregations. Its small size, slow rate of change and apparent lack of racial hostility made it comparatively easy to analyse. Of the three, it appeared to have the greatest chance of remaining "multicultural" over an extended period of time. Brooklyn's surrounding neighbourhood was the most economically deprived of the three congregations, with mostly poorer people living in the area.

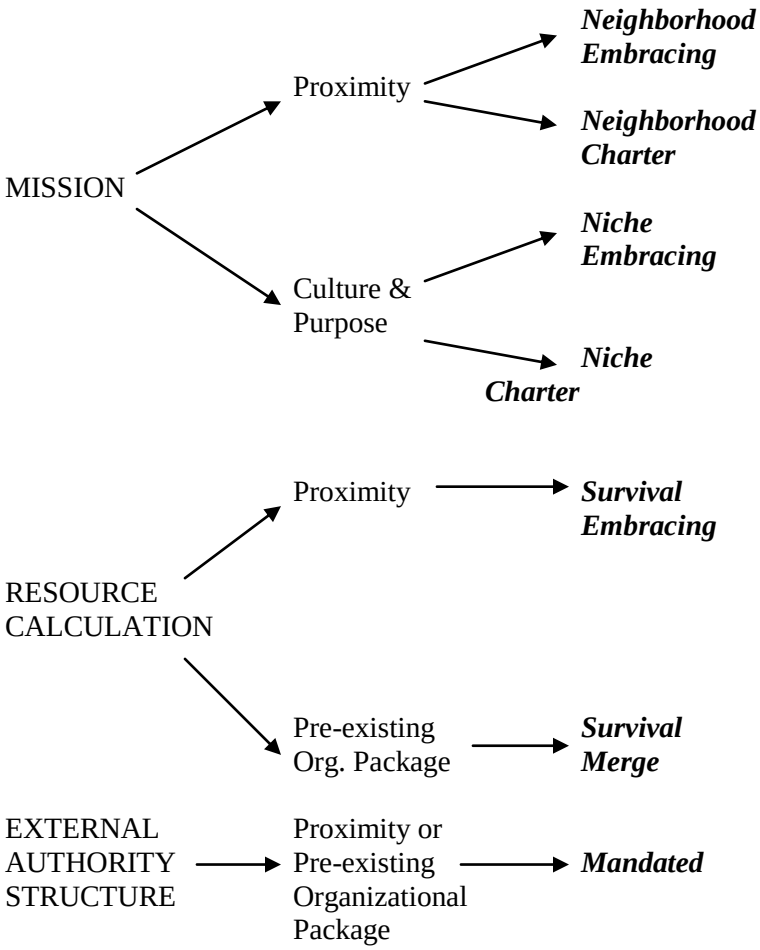
These three congregations represent the dynamics of racial change taking place in suburban SDA churches across South Africa. There are a number of commonalities between these congregations and there are also important differences related to their size, their neighbourhood, and the specific racial changes taking place in the congregation. Internal histories and power struggles add a unique perspective to each congregation being studied.

9.3 REASONS FOR TRANSITION TO HETEROGENEITY

As we begin our sociological and anthropological analysis of the three congregations, we turn our attention to firstly why these heterogeneous congregations came into existence. We note that none of these congregations intentionally began as multiracial congregations. For this research project we chose congregations that were undergoing unavoidable transition to racial and cultural heterogeneity. However, the reason for the introduction of new members of colour had both similarities and differences in the case of each church.

In an important research project sponsored by the Lily Endowment, Michael Emerson and Karen Chai Kim studied multiracial congregations in the United States using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. In a paper drawing on their qualitative research of twenty-three congregations, they developed a typology of eight different primary origins for the multiracial congregation. A summary of Emerson and Kim's typology is given below.

Figure 38: Impetus for Change, Diversification Source, & Multiracial Congregational Types



In this typology, Emerson and Kim found two main variables that underlie the development of multiracial congregations: "(1) the primary impetus for change (or charter); and (2) the source/origin of the minority population" (2003). The three congregations studied in this dissertation' research project did not fit neatly into Emerson and Kim's typology. On the one hand, external forces have impacted on each of these local congregations, not primarily through their immediate neighbourhoods, but through a complex set of contextual factors involving immigration and emigration, political changes, broader denominational policies and changes, and linguistic possibilities for immigrant groups. The internal forces were also complex, ranging from being one of a limited number of English-speaking Adventist congregations in a particular area, to having a culture of grace and acceptance. Leadership direction in the congregation may have been both embracing and resistant to change.

The reason for becoming multiracial is looked at a little differently by George Yancey, who suggests that four types of multiracial churches exist, based on the context for new races being involved in the congregation. These churches are:

1. Leadership Multiracial Churches—based around the ministry of a leader who attracts different races (predominantly Charismatic),
2. Evangelism Multiracial Churches—grown among different races through their evangelism strategies (predominantly Conservative Protestant),
3. Demographic Multiracial Churches—adding one race and subtracting another through neighbourhood changes (predominantly Liberal Protestant), and
4. Network Multiracial Churches—expansion of social networks within the church, which he notes are "more likely to grow because people have confidence to join, develops multiracial identity and friendships across races" (2003:60-61).

Sandton is an example of a congregation whose origin was particularly uniracial in character, with the hope of reaching white professionals, an aim that it appeared to meet fairly successfully until the mid-1990s. However, Sandton (unwittingly perhaps) developed a "niche-embracing" charter that became attractive to blacks. As the new political and social environment in Africa moved away from segregation, Sandton's more contemporary, open and professional worship started to appeal to a wider racial grouping. Articulate and educated immigrants also joined the congregation, looking for a church home that worshipped in a language they could understand. Sandton's niche of reaching "white professionals" now became a niche that simply reached professionals of all races.

Two other factors impacted on Sandton: some pro-integrationist blacks began attending Sandton in order to attend a "white church," and in a parallel movement, pro-segregation whites were learning that it was politically inappropriate to speak of any kind of "separation" in the new South Africa. Thus, a multitude of factors created the conditions for change, but the primary impetus did not appear to be the immediate neighbourhood, financial resources or a denominational mandate. Rather, it appeared to be a counter-play between complex socio-political forces and an internal niche that appealed to a broad racial grouping.

In addition, in interviews, it appeared that both white and black Adventists in South Africa generally want to express the "rainbow nation" ideal in their local congregation. However, a number are unwilling to do this where they feel minimalised, marginalised, and swamped, or where church growth is threatened (especially among their racial group). This translates into a willingness to accept races into the congregation, but sometimes frustration in dealing with the realities that such changes in the racial composition inevitably bring (see later section on the model of cultural transition).

Umbilo Church is an example of what can happen to a more historic church when it undergoes racial change. A long-standing white church in the Adventist community, Umbilo also started as a predominantly uniracial church. However, its mandate was never clearly uniracial, and its uniracial nature tended to reflect more the socio-political situation in South Africa than it did the actual mission of the congregation. As a result, with political changes taking place, Umbilo naturally followed changes in the wider society.

Umbilo was first impacted by race when educated immigrants started to attend its services. Its "multiracial niche" was created by immigrants being unable to attend other black congregations due to linguistic barriers. Umbilo's proximity to a nearby university campus was yet another "external" factor impacting on the congregation. This initially resulted in mature, educated, and "westernized" black immigrants attending the congregation, and ultimately a large number of younger black and mainly "local" students. Unlike Sandton, where poorer black immigrants mainly came from one national group (Malawians), Umbilo has had a mixture of refugees from different countries who have not formed a cohesive unit, but who have also not impacted on the congregation in any significant way.

Brooklyn Church represents racial transition in a smaller church. Its dynamics were only partially affected by immigrants (a small number of refugees attending the congregation), mainly because larger, more centralized churches (such as Mowbray Seventh-day Adventist Church) tended to absorb the immigrant influx. Brooklyn's friendly, down-to-earth character created space for nearby people of colour to begin attending its services. A closed culture would have probably ensured that Brooklyn remained uniracial, but its inclusive and welcoming culture enabled people of colour and "multicultural" families to feel at home.

Brooklyn seemed to have the greatest internal focus/niche of multiculturalism, with some "multicultural" families specifically attending because they felt racially accepted there.

Emerson and Kim note that when the locus of change comes from outside the congregation, the congregation is less likely to remain multiracial. However, when the locus of change is more internally

driven by its mission, it will more likely remain multiracial. In addition, they hypothesize that "the broader the area from which a congregation draws its racial diversification, the greater the likelihood that it will sustain its multiracial composition" (2003:24). Thus, multiracial congregations that form around a culture and purpose, drawing different races from a broader neighbourhood, are more likely to succeed.

In this light, the global nature of the Seventh-day Adventist church appears to be both an asset and a challenge. On the one hand, awareness of being part of a church body that encompasses nearly every country in the world has helped make local church members more willing to reflect that global community in its local congregation. Having a distinctive message has also meant that the Adventist church does tend to draw from wider than its immediate neighbourhood. Adventists will travel far to attend an Adventist church.

On the other hand, immigration movements have also meant that the Adventist congregation may undergo racial transition at a faster pace than congregations in other denominations as immigrants rapidly move into a local SDA church that reflects their faith. The options for Adventist immigrants in foreign environments are often limited by the day on which they worship. Hence, immigrants will seek out an Adventist church rather than simply attending any local Sunday-keeping church. In South Africa, immigrants have tended to join a local church instead of forming their own church. In other parts of the world, as the numbers of immigrants has grown, they have sometimes formed churches that were based around nationality or ethnicity (for instance, the Ghanaian SDA Church in Washington D.C. and the numerous Korean SDA churches through the United States).

We have seen that the reasons for these congregations becoming heterogeneous have ranged from complex socio-political forces such as immigration, the changing face of South Africa, and language issues for immigrants, to church administrative decisions. In addition, an internal focus of acceptance and inclusiveness combined with an attractive worship service has made these congregations likely candidates for change.

9.4 MODELS OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

The growing discipline of intercultural studies has given us insights into what happens when cultures interact with each other. In particular, attention has been directed to what has been called "culture shock,"[80] when a person from one culture enters another culture and experiences disorientation and distress. It was found that if people were able to get through their initial shock, they would eventually be able to feel comfortable in their new environment. This process of "cultural adaptation" (Kim and Gudykust 1988) has been extensively analysed, and common patterns have appeared.

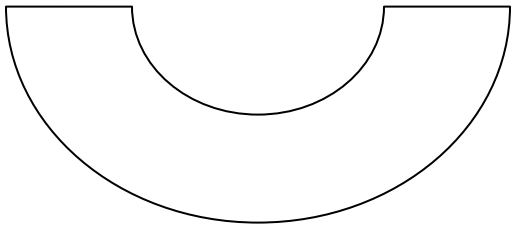
[80] A term coined by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg (1960), but frequently used in cross-cultural training.

9.4.1 The "U Curve" Model of Cultural Adaptation

Sverre Lysgaard, a Norwegian sociologist, interviewed Norwegian students in the United States. He developed a "U-curve theory" of adaptation. This involved three phases of cultural adaptation that are commonly experienced by immigrants. The first phase tends to be the excitement and anticipation phase as the person looks forward to interacting with the new culture. This is then followed by a period of shock and disorientation as they are confronted with unusual patterns of belief and behaviour (the bottom of the U-curve). The third phase is adaptation as migrants learn the rules and customs of the new cultural context and adapt their cultural identities (Martin and Nakayama 2000:211).

Figure 39: U-Model of CulturalAdaptation

Phase One:
Excitement and
Anticipation



Phase Three:
Adaptation—Linguistic
and Cultural Competence

This model, while useful, may be too simplistic for people who enter a culture over an extended period of time (Berry et. al. 1992). Martin and Nakayama comment that "a more accurate model represents long-term adaptation as a series of U-curves. Migrants alternate between feeling relatively adjusted and experiencing culture shock; over the long term, the feeling of culture shock diminishes" (2000:212).

9.4.2 Re-entry Shock

Cross-cultural studies have also identified a phenomenon known as "re-entry shock," where returning to one's home culture requires a secondary adaptation process (see Martin 1984 and Storti 1997). This has resulted in a process known as the "W-curve theory" of adaptation. However, there are significant differences between the first and second U-curves. In the first phase, the sojourner is fundamentally unchanged and enters a new cultural context, and in the reentry phase, he returns to his original context to discover that HE is the one who has changed (see Martin 1984; and Martin and Nakayama 2000:222).

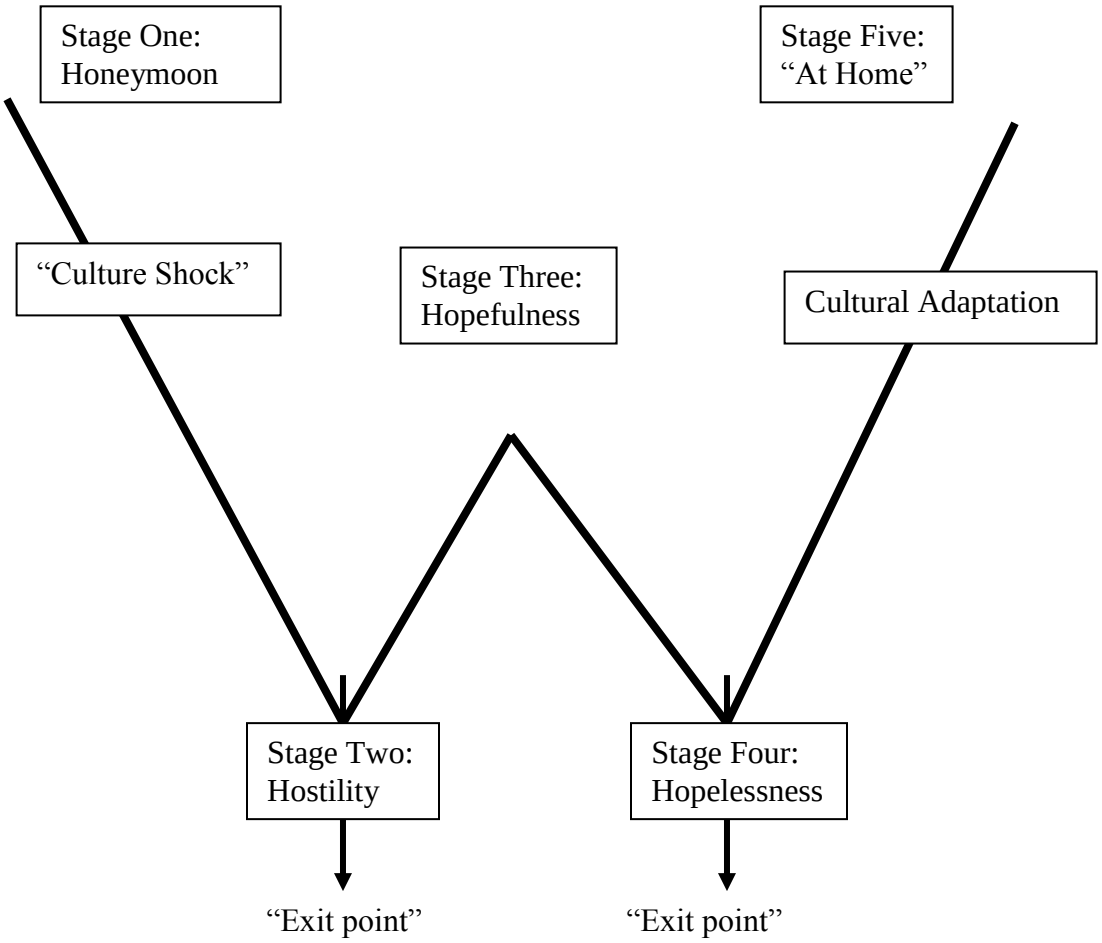
However, with migration increasing, a unique cultural identity development has occurred. Many people who make frequent trips between countries are now "living on the border" between their two identities (Oboler 1995:88). "People who move back and forth between cultural worlds often develop a multicultural identity" (Martin and Nakayama 2000:225). This multicultural identity is particularly important as we examine the culture of the local congregation in the midst of cultural and racial transition.

How does one live in two worlds? What happens when two cultural worlds collide and impact each other?

9.4.3 A Revised W-Curve Model of Cultural Adaptation[81]

The transitional process in a congregation undergoing cultural change seems to follow some of the typical dynamics involved in intercultural relations. However, individuals within the congregation are likely to experience this transition in different ways.

Figure 40: W-Model of Cultural Adaptation



9.4.3.1 Stage One: Honeymoon

The "honeymoon" period is so called because it denotes the excitement and idealism of the first phase of any new relationship. The early years of the new democratic South Africa following Nelson Mandela's election as president are an example of the "honeymoon" period. Many white and black South Africans were caught up in the somewhat idealistic notion of a truly multicultural South Africa where race would no longer be the dominant force in society. Many people were surprised at how quickly and quietly the

[81] Note that although the original "W-curve" model was focused around the "re-entry" process, the model I propose does not specifically deal with re-entry since the person has ongoing contact with their own culture.

transition to a "new South Africa" happened. Nelson Mandela even became a common hero of the different races. However, within a short time, culture shock set in as people came to realize that real racial and social problems remained despite the "rainbow nation" dream.

Within the local church, we notice a similar development. There was surprisingly little resistance or antagonism when people of colour first started attending the churches studied. This was partly because the arrival of blacks and other races had little substantial impact on the church's culture. And partly it was because the churches didn't pay much attention to it and were pre-occupied with other crises or church issues. Whites appeared welcoming and warm but did not seem to have been particularly proactive in involving people of character in the congregation. Throughout the interviews, people of colour told of feeling marginalized or like they were sitting on the sidelines during the first years that they came to the "white" congregation. However, there does not appear to have been much "overt" racism and it was more a feeling of being left out of positions and influence.

Bernard Adeney, making use of the work of Arnold van Gennep and Anthony J. Gittins, talks of how a stranger experiences a new cultural environment. He shows how initial interaction is one of exploration and "is marked by formality and tentativeness." In response, the host culture may show "exaggerated politeness and respect" to the immigrant (1995:133). Thus, what appears to have been a "honeymoon" was in reality the curiosity and politeness of two strangers getting to know each other.

Added to this usual stranger-host interaction were other political factors. With the demise of the apartheid era, many white churches and church members were also anxious to show that they were not racist. A number of whites spoke proudly of being in a "multicultural" church or of having attended one. Among people of colour, there was a similar sentiment. Within the new South Africa it suddenly became politically correct to speak of having friends of different races.

The "honeymoon" period was therefore marked by an apparent friendliness and acceptance from both sides. For some, there was even excitement that the racial sins of the past could be put behind, and a new non-racial future could be born. However, this apparent state of bliss was deceptive. Firstly, worshipping together did not mean "unity." Blacks found whites willing to have them come to church, but reluctant to give them positions in the church. Secondly, most whites wanted to "move on," and they were often surprised that blacks still carried "racial sensitivities" with them. Thirdly, blacks often found themselves accommodating to the "white culture," of the church and hence the result was not integration, but assimilation. Finally, most whites did not realize how rapidly young whites would leave, and how rapidly new people of colour would come into the congregation. Racial change went far more quickly than had been expected.

9.4.3.2 Stage Two: Hostility

Over a period of time, whites began to realize that they could not simply have a white church with a few black members. In all the churches, limited attempts appear to have been made by whites to include blacks (and other races). Whites were surprised at the difficulties in trying to get blacks to move their membership so that they could take positions. (For instance, blacks attending Sandton wanted to keep their tithe going to the black churches. and there was a reluctance or administrative challenge by black churches to move membership.) In the case of immigrants, the challenges of moving membership were much greater, due to the difficulties of contacting remote churches.

In none of the churches was there outright hostility; instead, growing racial tensions simmered beneath the surface. Whites, though initially welcoming of blacks, could not understand some of their cultural attitudes and perspectives. Blacks, sometimes optimistic about white attitudes, suddenly stumbled across real or perceived white prejudice and found themselves hurt and betrayed.

At Brooklyn, one elderly lady tried to get the church to change to accommodate her white culture until she made such a fuss that they asked her to leave. She suddenly let loose at the black people taking Sabbath School that morning, calling them names and telling them to leave the church. Her reaction is probably an extreme example of what many people face as they undergo "culture shock," the realization that their expectations are not being met and that their worldview and identity is under attack.

Those who undergo severe culture shock often leave a multicultural church. They find it too disruptive to their identities, and they seek assurance in their more comfortable "home culture." Sometimes they are fully aware of this reason, but usually it tends to be more unconscious—a growing dissatisfaction with the church and a feeling that the church is irrelevant and alienated from the rest of one's life.

Many times, there is a growing awareness of culture shock. For some whites, culture shock occurs as they realize that black women breastfeed in public, children have different understandings of reverence, and responsibilities are a communal not an individual commitment. For blacks, there is sometimes culture shock over the apparent lifelessness of the white worship service, amazement at the lack of racial sensitivity, and frustration with white dominance and control.

In the three churches studied, most racial tension and cultural misunderstanding did not seem to break out in open hostility, but instead festered beneath the surface. Many (particularly whites) choose to leave rather than deal with their building hostile feelings.

9.4.3.3 Stages Three and Four: Hopefulness and Hopelessness

If white members choose not to leave after their initial "culture shock," the next stage may follow quite naturally. They discover that an offence was not intended or that the misunderstood action can be explained or tolerated. Someone explains the culture to them, or they just adjust to the different behaviour and move on. At this stage, the church member often moves from hostility to hopefulness.

The church at this stage is made up of those who remain, work through their initial shock and begin to be hopeful again about their congregation becoming a place where unity and reconciliation can be a reality. However, over a period of time, another disturbing incident may take place, or a person may start to feel genuinely isolated from the new, incoming group. They may grieve the loss of past friendships and also sense a growing loss of control and satisfaction. Left unchecked, the person may descend into hopelessness at this point, feeling like they "tried, but it didn't work." Sometimes a person will vacillate between hope and hopelessness for some time as they try to adjust to the new cultures in the church. At this point, those who get tired of trying will probably leave the church.

9.4.3.4 White Flight

As part of the study, I met with people who had left the SDA congregations being studied and asked them to explain their reasons for leaving. None of them indicated race as the major reason for leaving, but it was clear that it was certainly one of the factors. At Sandton, one "yuppie" lady explained that things just weren't professional enough for her at Sandton any more, and she preferred the more professional atmosphere in her boyfriend's church. She had previously been one of the worship leaders for the second service at Sandton, and the lack of "professionalism" that she referred to was certainly part of the "cultural change" at Sandton as more blacks were involved in the worship service and it became more spontaneous.

A number of those who left Sandton explained that it no longer "met their needs." At Umbilo, a middle-aged man who had left the church said that he could have stayed, but his kids couldn't always understand the black teachers in the Sabbath School, and his wife didn't always relate well to the blacks. While he saw himself as being "multicultural," he thought that his family was not.

Commenting on a similar situation in a church that they studied, Emerson and Smith show that people rarely attribute their reasons for leaving to race. They did a number of interviews with whites who had left an intentionally multicultural church:

> All spoke of feeling as if their needs and their family's needs, were not being met at the church. It felt, they said, as if the church was going in a different direction than was needed by their family. All were adamant that their leaving had nothing to do with race, but rather that the church was simply not

> meeting their needs. And all said that although they were now part of nearly all-white congregations, they did not choose their new churches based on race, but fit, comfort, and felt need (2000:148).

Emerson and Smith see "white flight" as a result of a number of sociological factors, and not simply a matter of direct prejudice. They argue that the concept of a religious marketplace creates a situation where homogeneous congregations are more likely to thrive (2000:137ff). In particular, they note the impact of social networks on the congregation. Those at the edge of the congregation's niche (its particular and distinct identity) tend to have greater ties to people outside the congregation than ties to people inside the congregation.[82] Hence, there is a natural pull toward the ties outside the congregation, where competition exists for these members at the "edge" to join other groups (the so-called *niche overlap* effect). Whites, therefore, tend to leave multiracial congregations to join white congregations because they wish to move from being atypical members to being typical members of a group, and their social network ties pull them in this direction.

Emerson and Smith also argue that internally similar congregations are less personally costly (2000:145ff), and hence more popular. This is for a number of reasons, such as status similarity among friends, loss aversion, and a bias in favour of the status quo (ibid.). Thus, rather than living out a mission, congregations tend to exist for social reasons. The net result is internally similar congregations:

> The organization of American religious marketplace encourages religious groups to cater to people's existing preferences, rather than their ideal callings…. The congregation often looks to religion not as an external force that places radical demands on their lives, but rather as a way to fulfill their needs.
>
> They will seek meaning and belonging with the least change possible. Thus, if they can go to either the Church of Meaning and Belonging, or the Church of Sacrifice for Meaning and Belonging, most people choose the former. It provides benefit for less cost. Prophetic voices calling for the end of group division and inequality, to the extent that this requires sacrifice or group cohesion, are perfectly free to exist, but they are ghettoized (Emerson and Smith 2000:164).

Ziegenhals, in an earlier study dealing with white flight, identifies both "push" and "pull" factors. The push factors are related to white anxiety in the face of colour change. The pull factors come into play in two ways. The idealization of "suburban bliss" combined with urbanization that attracts aspiring people of colour to the cities mean that whites are pulled to the suburbs, while blacks are pulled into the central urban areas (1978:48).

[82] Emerson and Smith draw this concept of a *niche edge effect* from sociologists Popielarz and McPherson, who argue that "Members at the edge of the organization's niche will have higher turnover than members at the center of the organization's niche, as a result of their higher proportion of extraorganizational ties and their lower proportion of the intraorganizational ties" (as quoted by Emerson and Smith 2000:148).

In identifying the fears that whites have in transitional communities, Ziegenhals suggests the following major components: fear of social and racial change, fear of financial loss in property and business, fear of crime and violence, and fear of what will happen to the community schools (1978:61-67).

9.4.3.5 Stage Five: Feeling at Home

As the culture of the church changes, people learn to adapt to the new culture and enjoy the new "narrative" of the church. Thus, the final stage of adaptation is when the church member realizes that they feel comfortable in the "transitioned" church. The makeup of the church is familiar to them, and they enjoy the cultural experience of the church, even though it may be different from their particular racial culture.

However, two problems face individuals who are adapting to a culture at church which is different from their own racial culture. One is that the church itself will continue to be impacted by racial change, and thus the multicultural church continues to become increasingly black or coloured. The other challenge is even more significant. Even when individuals in the church have successfully adapted to a new culture in the church, the reality remains that when they invite their friends to church, these friends must pass through the same agonizing process of cultural change and adaptation. This leads to the feeling that multicultural churches are not "growing" churches.

This is compounded by what David Anderson calls the "flocking principle," in which he notes that blacks (in the United States) are able to bring their friends and families to church more easily than whites can. Firstly, blacks have a greater extended family to invite (a larger social network), and secondly, these invitations carry more weight than in white families where family obligations are less important. Thirdly, whites tend to be more individualistic, and religion is considered a private issue. This makes it more difficult to extend an invitation to church, because one is more likely to be met with apathy or hostility when a religious invitation is made (Anderson 2004:103ff).

When the "flocking principle" is combined with the idea of social network ties discussed earlier, it is easy to see why multiracial churches tend to lose their white members. While older white members tend to be loyal to their congregations, younger whites are quickly drawn outside of the congregation's niche, and it remains difficult to draw in new whites.

9.5 A MODEL OF CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE

What we have considered thus far is predominantly from the perspective of the individual church member. We will now step back and look at corporate congregational change and formulate a model of what this change involves for the narrative structure of the congregation. Insights will be drawn from the

congregations studied, and will be compared with current theories of cultural identity, development and transition.

9.5.1 Stage One: Status Quo

In the early phases of cultural change, people of colour who started coming into the congregation did not appear to have had a significant impact. In all three of the churches studied, the first people of colour to be noticed were generally of a poorer status than the rest of the congregation. In Sandton's case, the Malawian immigrant workers generally kept to themselves, and apart from (and maybe because of) having a Sabbath School group, did not interact much with the rest of the church. For Umbilo, the Portuguese-speaking refugees came and went without affecting the local congregation. At Brooklyn, the first black person was an older lady who lived in a "squatter camp" and was seen as an interesting but not threatening addition.

This first "sprinkling" of colour may have caused consternation to some members in each of the churches, but the congregation as a whole remained relatively unperturbed. In Umbilo's case, the pastor tried to restructure the church's mission around reaching whites, but found very little support among his elders; in other cases, people who couldn't handle the change protested at first and then simply left. Most of those who remained were cautious, but accepting of the new development.

The churches thus weathered the introduction of people of colour fairly innocuously, which is remarkable considering the previously strong barriers that had existed between races in South Africa. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the context of race relations in South Africa dramatically changed in the early 1990s (when the change occurred in each of these three congregations). It was expected, even anticipated, that churches would come to reflect the cosmopolitan racial makeup of the country. Rapid black urbanization and sophistication, immigration of well-educated blacks, refugee movements and the dismantling of apartheid all served to create external pressure on the congregation toward heterogeneity. Hence, many churches accepted the introduction of people of colour as inevitable and were not unduly upset when the first blacks arrived.

Secondly, within each of these congregations, narratives of grace and acceptance were already at work. In Sandton's case it was the grace-oriented preaching of Ian Hartley; at Umbilo it was the relationship-centred approaches of Edgar Nunes. Brooklyn's lay leadership created a phlegmatic and welcoming culture. Although church members and leaders were not always aware of what the racial implications of these narratives of grace and acceptance would be, the very existence of these narratives helped to ease racial transition in its early phases.

Thirdly, the initially "poorer" immigrants and refugees who attended the congregations did not try to control power structures or threaten church culture. "White culture" remained very palpable in the congregation, and white growth (or stability) continued unabated. Hence the church's narrative was largely unaffected, as the status quo basically reigned supreme. However, for incoming people of colour, this narrative generally resulted in marginalization.[83] They felt unable to meaningfully participate in the church, and yet somewhat disconnected from their home culture. Why, then, did they keep coming to the church? For some immigrants, their attending the church arose out of their commitment to the Adventist ecclesiological, eschatological and soteriological narratives.

Immigrants who expressed this high commitment would attend church even if they did not fully understand the language or if they felt the climate was inhospitable. This is because they felt that being an Adventist meant worshipping on a Sabbath morning at an Adventist church, and it mattered little what one got out of it. They felt that Sabbath-keeping was a matter of obedience, not convenience.

9.5.2 Stage Two: Assimilation and Hegemony

As the number of black and coloured faces grew in the congregation, so did awareness of them. As sophisticated, educated and passionate blacks and coloureds started attending the congregation, the congregation started to make space for the newcomers. Often this would begin in a smaller teaching role in a Sabbath School or in leading out in singing or worship. Eventually, the pulpit would be extended to the newcomers, and whites were generally appreciative of black preaching. In some cases, whites became quite excited about how "multiracial" their congregation was, and carried it as a badge of honour in the new South Africa.

However, the rosy picture belied a more realistic picture of segregation. Blacks were not free to express their own culture. Rather, they were allowed to participate in the congregation as long as they were passionate about Adventism but not about black issues. Some blacks made friends with whites, but often doing so in white cultural settings such as rugby matches and "white" church potlucks. Whites largely controlled the board, but blacks now had limited participation in the church's structure as deacons, Sabbath School superintendents, teachers, etc. Whites, in turn, generally appreciated the passion and spirituality of people of colour, but this was almost "from a distance."

[83] "Marginalization occurs when the individual or group expresses little interest in maintaining cultural ties with either the dominant culture or the migrant culture…. However the term *marginalization* has come to describe, more generally, individuals who live on the margin of a culture, not fully able to participate in its political and social life, as a result of cultural differences" (Martin and Nakayama 2000:208-209).

9.5.3 Stage Three: Limited Integration

Over time, people of colour began to move into significant positions such as elders and program coordinators. Black preaching became more common. Fellowship lunches had more "ethnic" dishes, and greater numbers from different cultures were present. In all three churches, one or more of the Sabbath School classes became largely or exclusively black. People of colour began to feel that they had cultural space in the new congregation.

However, this time of integration also generated the first real culture shock. Some of the white members started expressing concerns over the possibility that their church was becoming "black," and nervously joked about "how dark the future looked." While some in the congregation embraced this multiracial future, others were sceptical. While very few admitted to racial reasons, the number of whites leaving the congregation accelerated. The hardest-hit group in each church was the white youth. The reasons for the white youth leaving are complex, ranging from:

(a) identity issues,
(b) the spiritual relevance of the Adventist faith,
(c) emigration possibilities,
(d) friendship circles, and
(e) racial intolerance.

As primarily "white" members chose points of exit from the cultural transition process, blacks simultaneously stepped into vacant positions. The influence of black and coloured leadership in the congregation increased the number of people of colour attending the congregation, and so the cycle began. As white members left, black people came in increasing numbers.

However, during this time core white and black leaders emerged in the congregation and helped to guide the congregation through this time of change. The church boards were generally fairly optimistic about their future, and they consolidated around the remaining white leaders and the new black leaders who were coming in. Projects were planned that involved both white members and people of colour. The church now appeared to be a fully integrated multiracial faith community, but this was only on the surface. The reality in most churches was limited integration and inclusion alongside more generalized social separation. In most cases, whites stopped attending social functions, such as potlucks, where blacks were likely to attend in large numbers. Those whites who initially attended black weddings and funerals found it culturally uncomfortable and felt that they didn't have the time to spend the "whole day at one event."

This phase was limited integration, because integration varied at different levels and between different people. Some whites in Sandton's second service embraced integration, while others in the first service tended to remain more separatist. At Umbilo, the church board tended to be more integrated, but several groups, such as the student body, remained somewhat excluded from the rest of the church structure. At Brooklyn, the lack of white youth essentially meant that the black youth bonded together, but this group, while supported by the church, was not always fully integrated into the church.

9.5.4 Stage Four: Integration and Disintegration

In the next stage, churches begin a process that leads to both integration and disintegration. At the current time, all three churches have moved into this phase of the cultural transition process. White numbers have dwindled to where they are no longer the majority. The churches have become unsure of their future—who will determine the vision, the makeup and the ethos of the congregation? The church board may become significantly black or coloured very quickly. Some blacks or coloureds may be militant about change having to occur, and some whites may demonstrate significant racial feelings of hostility or hopelessness. These are the minority. Most are simply unsure of the church's vision and strategy in the midst of cultural change.

This is a process of both integration and disintegration. The church begins to find new narratives, structures and rituals that bring its diverse components together. At the same time, the period of uncertainty results in loss of vision and, very often, white flight (see earlier section from Emerson and Smith for reasons for this phenomenon). In a sense, this disintegrative force has been operating all along, but now that the cultural balance has "swung," white hegemony breaks down as existing structures, rituals and programs are redefined. There is a struggle to define ethics in the new cultural situation. It is interesting that in all the churches, social activities were not highly valued. This possibly demonstrates that the various groups in the church are beginning to value interaction in their own group as of higher value than interaction with the wider church. As social events no longer meet a niche market in the church, so they become less valued by members of the church.

Another area that was significantly affected was evangelism. All three churches were struggling with how to reach out to their communities. If they held a public evangelistic meeting, the blacks would be more likely to attend and join, and thus further precipitate the crises of disintegration and cultural change in the congregation. If they focussed on the whites, would the whites who came to the evangelistic event be interested in attending a multicultural church? Internal struggles and challenges also replaced the desire to do evangelism.

As the previous narrative breaks down, however, the potential for building a new "rainbow" narrative arises. However, there is also a very real possibility that the new narrative will simply be a black or coloured one. Churches struggle to enhance positive integrative forces while dealing with negative disintegrative ones. In most churches, after the initial limited integration stage, there seemed to be a movement of cultures away from each other socially, even though the church appeared to be more integrated and diverse in its programming. Blacks and coloureds now had more of their own colour with which to socialize, and whites suddenly found themselves a minority and were seeking to create cultural space of their own.

9.5.5 Stage Five: Stabilization and Reorganization

This stage still lies ahead for the churches in this study. As the most significant racial transition dies down and the percentage of cultural groups stabilizes, the church reestablishes itself around its new members. A new narrative or narratives gain pre-eminence, and the church begins to reorganize around the new narrative(s). The challenge for most churches is that external forces are still dictating cultural change, so it is difficult for stabilization to occur. In most cases, churches will continue transitioning until only a small percentage of the original (white) population remains.

It seems that reorganization will probably not be a thought-through process. Rather, remnants of the previous narrative will continue to exist in the church, even though the participants have changed. New cultural rituals and structures will continue to undergo metamorphosis from old ones, and some whites will continue to remain in key positions for a number of years. All of this will happen naturally (although at times traumatically) as part of the transitional process.

It is predicted that with time, the churches will be more focussed on their vision, more evangelistic in their outreach and more comfortable with their identity. Racial transition will reach a plateau, although of course elements of change will continue to exist in any congregation.

Others have seen the development of the multiracial congregation in slightly different but parallel ways. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook looks at the development of these kinds of congregations in terms of how well they progress in dealing with and moving beyond racism. She suggests the following stages of development:

1. An e*xclusive* congregation where one group has domination over another.
2. *A passive* congregation which maintains the privilege of those already in power in the church.
3. A c*ompliant* congregation which values multiculturalism on the symbolic level, yet essentially reflects an assimilation model. This congregation puts the burden for change on the marginalized group and tends to talk about racism only from within the perspective of racial unity.

4. An *antiracist* congregation which has increasing commitment to eliminate racism as well as sensitivity to the effects of former oppression. It can envision an alternative racist community, but its institutional structures continue to maintain white privileges and white culture.
5. A *redefining* congregation which makes intentional choices to rebuild its congregational life according to antiracist analysis and identity. This congregation recognizes racism, makes commitments to change and takes the actions necessary to implement that change.
6. A t*ransformed* congregation which upholds the future vision of a new reality where racial oppression no longer sets limits on human growth or potential. It is fully multicultural and has overcome systemic racism. Its boundaries with the broader society are porous as it works to eliminate social oppression and educate others to do the same (2002:20-22).

Kujawa-Holbrook's model is a useful "ideal" schema for dealing with racism, but it does not take into account the actual stages which congregations may find themselves progressing. Norman Peart proposes a similar model to Kujawa-Holbrook's, working from the perspective of integration.

Figure 41: Reconciliation Continuum of Norman Peart

Lack of Reconciliation Most Complete Reconciliation
Segregation------Differentiation------Assimilation------Intentional but Irrational------InHimtegration
(Peart 2000:130)

1. *Segregation* happens where individuals of a different race do not become members of a church, and in some cases are forcibly excluded.
2. *Differentiation* occurs when churches are built around ethnic distinctions or linguistic needs, such as immigrant churches for Koreans.
3. *Assimilation* happens when a church is happy to see the members of a minority group visit or even join the church, but mistakenly equates the presence of these individuals as evidence that racial reconciliation is being achieved.
4. *Intentional but irrational integration* takes place when a church attempts to unite based on the principle that it's right, but does not attack the cultural and societal norms that hold its members. The church then becomes artificially integrated, but the members are only integrated when the church members gather. Prejudices and racial thoughts of members are not addressed. The church becomes other-world instead of counter-world in mission
5. *InHIMtegration* comes about when a church makes intentional choices to mix, accept, represent, and manifest racial and ethnic differences, but at the same time magnifies to a greater extent the oneness of believers in Christ (Peart 2000:130-142).

Peart's model also provides an idealistic model for integration, specifying where congregations can be found along a continuum to ideal reconciliation. However, he does not indicate how churches progress from one stage to the next.

In a slightly different vein, DeYoung, Emerson, Kim and Yancey evaluate three kinds of multiracial congregations and describe their characteristics. The table below gives a summary of their observations (2003:165).

Table 3: Characteristics of Multiracial Congregation Models

	ASSIMILATED MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION	PLURALIST MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION	INTEGRATED MULTIRACIAL CONGREGATION
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE	Reflects one dominant racial culture	Contains separate and distinct elements of all racial cultures represented in the congregation	Maintains aspects of separate cultures and also creates a new culture from the cultures in the congregation
RACE OF LEADERSHIP	Dominant race	Representative of the different races in the congregation	Representative of the different races in the congregation
DEGREE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION ACROSS RACES	Can be high or low	Low	High

DeYoung et al. argue for the importance of achieving authentic integration. Congregations that follow either an assimilation or pluralist route will not achieve genuine integration or reconciliation. Thus their model is an attempt to lead congregations to a preferred integrationist model in which they argue that a new hybrid culture should develop that incorporates the distinct cultures in the church (2003:168).

While there is much value in the various models that we have discussed, the model proposed in this research project identifies not only situations in which churches find themselves, or ideal models toward which churches should aim, but also how to understand multiracial churches from a transitional perspective. We have looked more at practical stages of development rather than different forms of alternate congregational life. From within this perspective we have been enabled to see the interplay between internal and external congregational forces leading to the building of a new non-racial and reconciled narrative.

9.6 CULTURAL VALUES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CONGREGATION

Significant research into cultural patterns and values has been done in the last few decades, helping us to understand different cultural worldviews, activities and belief systems. Early research indicated that cultures did differ from one another, but that there were also individuals within a culture who varied from the cultural patterns most often associated with it. This conclusion was reached by Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck, who closely examined the work of cultural anthropologists (1960). They suggested that humans face common problems, and the range of alternatives for a culture's problems is limited. Thus, within any culture there will be preferred solutions which most people in the culture will select,

even though some individuals will choose other solutions. Over time, they suggested, the preferred solutions will shape the basic cultural patterns of that culture. While some solutions will be preferred, others will only be permitted, and still others prohibited.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck then suggested that the "common" human problems that cultures face involve relationships with others and the world. In particular they see cultures as developing different "value orientations" to five key questions:

1. What is the human orientation to activity?
2. What is the relationship of humans to each other?
3. What is the nature of human beings?
4. What is the relationship of human beings to the nature/world?
5. What is the orientation of humans to time?

The preferred answer to each of these questions shows a culture's value orientations, and can be mapped out on a continuum, with different cultures falling along a particular point on the continuum.

Table 4: Value Orientations (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck)

Orientation	**Postulated Range of Values**		
Activity	Being	Being-in-becoming	Doing
Relational	Linearity	Collaterality	Individualism
Human nature	Evil	Mixture: good/evil	God
Man-nature	Subjugation - nature	Harmony - nature	Master - nature
Time	Past	Present	Future

(Source: Lustig and Koester 1999:87)

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's ideas have been very influential among intercultural communication scholars (Lustig and Koester 1999:87) and continue to dominate discussion and debate in culture research articles.

This overview of differences in cultural patterns provides a framework for discussing some of the culture differences at work in the congregations in this study. Of course we will note, like Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, that individuals vary within a particular culture. We will also note changing cultural paradigms as cultures interact within one another.

9.6.1 Activity Orientations

On the first scale of answers to the question of human activity, there does appear to be a difference with regard to black and white cultures in the congregations studied. In general, older whites in the

congregation were more likely to focus on "doing," while older blacks were more likely to focus on "being." However, younger people in the congregations appeared to be a more complicated mix of the two values. For instance, a number of younger whites appeared to be looking for "being" in greater "intimacy" with God that was less dependent on a "works-based religion," while some young professional blacks appeared to be very driven by accomplishments and tasks.

A key way in which the "being" versus "doing" continuum expresses itself is identified by Lingenfelter and Mayers as "person versus task" (1986:81-94). In a person-oriented culture, it is more important to be with people than it is to accomplish a specific task (Muganda in Baker ed. 1995:48). For instance, in the interviews, whites felt that it was acceptable to miss a wedding or funeral of a distant relative or church member acquaintance if they had a pressing task that needed immediate attention (see also ibid. 46). On the other hand, many blacks felt that being at a wedding or funeral for the sake of family and friends was more important than accomplishing personal tasks. This is in harmony with the African concept of *ubuntu*, which suggests that we exist together and not separately (ibid. 47). These different value orientations created different expectations about where a person should be if there was a church function. Blacks were more likely to attend group programs, whereas whites were more likely to accomplish personal tasks.

9.6.2 Social Relations Orientations

Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck identify another area of different cultural orientations. They ask how humans relate to one another (social relations), and in this area we see further reasons why differing expectations exist among the cultures in the congregations. This question examines who has authority in a culture and how important cultural obligations are. Again, responses to this question differ, and there is a continuum from social hierarchy to individualism. In a culture that emphasizes a hierarchical approach, there are clear lines of authority, increased formality, and greater group cohesiveness. People generally communicate indirectly and through intermediaries, and there is a strong sense of obligation when it comes to social functions and reciprocity (returning favours).

On the other hand, there are cultures that value equality and individualism, thus stressing informality, diversity, directness and independence. A particular dimension of this social relations continuum is brought out by Lingenfelter and Mayers when they refer to a "status versus achievement" continuum (1986:95-104). They note that in some cultures prestige is ascribed, whereas in other cultures it must be achieved.

Again, on this question there was a clear difference between blacks and whites, although the greatest difference on this question did not appear to be black versus white, but young versus old. Younger people seemed to be more accepting of differences, less concerned with authority and less formal. However, racial cultural differences were still clear. For instance, white youth were more likely to not wear ties than were black youth. Black youth also appeared to be more conscious of social/cultural obligations than white youth, and black youth were also more likely to attend church programs or family events (Muganda in Baker ed. 1995:44). Respect for elders also seemed to be more apparent among black youth than white youth.

Cultural value orientations in the area of social relations work themselves out in different ways in the congregations. For instance, at Sandton, the first service tends to be more formal, and this is the service that attracts most of the whites in the congregation. This appears to be because the older whites feel more "comfortable" in the more formal service, whereas younger whites were initially attracted to the second service, but after a while stopped attending church, leaving the second service largely black. Thus, the whites in the congregation lean toward "formalism" and "hierarchy," and the blacks lean toward equality and diversity. This difference also appears to be age-related rather than race-related.

In the Umbilo congregation, there are a diverse number of answers to social relations. For instance, middle-aged and older whites are definitely more formal and hierarchical, with key leaders explaining

that things must be "done a certain way." This has generally been accepted by the incoming people of colour, and the church is more formal than most Adventist churches. However, the pastor is open to greater diversity and equality, and he tries to bring an element of informality into the service through humour and sharing. In contrast to the congregation as a whole, the largely white youth group is much more informal in both their attire and attitude. But they are offset by university (black) students who appear to be more formal and more conscious of prescribed social relations. The church is now at a paradoxical moment where they, on the one hand, are accepting of diversity, autonomy and directness, but on the other hand, do have strongly prescribed social behaviours, authority and formality.

At Brooklyn, a white culture of informality, directness, diversity, and autonomy is now being challenged by older black and coloured members who do not value these elements as much. As a result, there has been a subtle shift toward greater formality and authority, with a higher expectation of social obligations. The appointment of an older coloured pastor has helped move the church in this direction. Since the youth program runs almost independently of the congregation, not much age tension has arisen as a result of this shift.

Racial differences are also apparent in the way that people handle directness. Black people are likely to ask an uncle or an aunt to mediate for them in a cultural dispute or to tell a proverb or story (Muganda in Baker ed.1995:44), whereas whites are more likely to confront a person directly. However, black preaching tends to be more direct than white, and often has an emphasis on "calling sin by its name" from the public pulpit. White preaching is more circumspect and prescribed in the handling of public issues. Hence, there appears to be an interesting contrast between private directness and public directness between different cultures. Once again, however, these differences are much less notable in the younger age groups where both blacks and whites tend to be more direct in their conversations and conflict resolution.

In summary, social relations orientations are as much defined by age as they are by race. However, race remains a significant indicator of different value orientations in the area of social relations. These racial cultural values have created contrasting expectations of authority, obligation and formality that impact on the congregation.

9.6.3 Self-Orientations

The third area of Kluckhorn and Stodtbeck concerns the orientation toward self. While they primarily occupied themselves with the question of the goodness or evil of the human self, others have expanded this original question to include how identity, motivation and value are ascribed to oneself (see Lustig and Koester 1999; Condon and Yousef 1975; Stewart and Bennett 1991). This builds off the previous

continuum of social relations and proves to be a more fruitful study of cultural patterns than simply the question of good and evil. The central question here is whether a culture allows the self to be developed on an individualistic or collectivistic basis.

This appeared to be the greatest difference between whites and blacks in the congregations. Most whites have grown up with a self that is located almost solely within the individual, and the individual is seen as separate from others. However, most blacks define who people are as a result of their association with others. The concept of *ubuntu* is alien to the thinking of many whites, even though it is part of the very cultural fabric of blacks. This helps to explain why whites feel free to associate in any grouping that they choose, while blacks feel betrayed when whites leave their social circles. Whites do not generally feel strong social obligations to the group, whereas blacks tend to define themselves by their group (Muganda in Baker 1995:43).

Of course, once again there are age differences that can be noted here, with younger whites and blacks feeling more autonomous and individualistic than their parents. However, it does appear that the cultural value of community remains strong even in black youth, whereas white youth tend to be extremely individualistic. For instance, an afternoon program will attract the black youth who feel that they should be at the "community" event, even if it does not particularly interest them. In contrast, whites are more likely to base their events around activities of interest to themselves and let those who want to come, come. This is not to say that there are no community values; the emphasis is simply different. The obligation to be at an event will be based more on younger peer pressure than on older member expectations. And the younger white person is more likely to "make up his own mind" than is the younger black person.

This individualistic versus collectivistic approach shows itself in many ways. In white weddings, only select people are generally invited. In black weddings, generally everyone is invited. When a white person dies, only the closest friends of the family and relatives visit at the home of the bereaved. When a black person dies, church members throng to the bereaved person's home and hold nightly services there. When a youth program is planned at a black church, everyone attends, regardless of their age. When it is planned at a white church, anyone over a certain age is frowned upon if they attend the event. White youth love individual events such as rock climbing, miniature golf, etc. Black youth love communal events such as music concerts, society meetings, etc. Of course, the more westernized a black youth is, the more likely his cultural values will become individualistic. The differences also extend to basic attitudes such as white questions like "Why can't that person help themselves and get a job?" to black questions such as "Why don't the white conferences help the black conferences with money?"

Since there is so little understanding of race, whites and blacks often get frustrated with each other over unmet expectations. Unwritten cultural laws that prescribe values, norms and beliefs are operating in many cultural clashes. A number of scholars believe that this invidualism-collectivism dimension is by far the most important attribute that distinguishes one culture from another (see particularly C. Harry Hui and Harry C. Triandis, "Individualism-Collectivism: A Study of Cross-Cultural Researches," 1989:225-248, and Lustig and Koester 1999:122).

Another way of looking at the individualistic-collectivistic continuum has been identified by Edward T. Hall, who focused on communicative aspects of cultural differences. He identified two major types of cultural communication differences: high-context and low-context cultures (1977). In high-context cultures, much of the message is assumed and tends to be coded, whereas low-context cultures tend to be much more explicit. Highly collectivistic cultures tend to be high-context cultures, and this can be seen in some of the black African tendency to tell a story rather than directly state a request. The context is supposed to provide the clues to the resolution of the story.

Since most whites tend to be more "low-context," they tend to be explicit, and cannot understand why "blacks take so long to get to the point." Some blacks, especially those who have not had much exposure to whites, are confused when whites seem to ignore their requests. Hall also points out that in high-context cultures "the group is very important, as are traditions and members of the ingroup are easily recognized. Time is less structured and more responsive to people's needs" (as explained in Lustig and Koester 1999:111).

Geert Hofstede (1991) also deals with the individualistic-collectivistic orientations of cultures. In his survey of 100,000 IBM employees (and some of the natural gender and corporate skewing that would have resulted) he saw distinct differences between the ways different cultures related to this continuum. He noted that the best predictor of where a culture or person would be placed on this continuum was economic development. Wealthy cultures tended to be individualistic, whereas poor cultures tended to be collectivistic. Thus, the initial immigration of wealthier blacks tended to represent a culture that was similarly individualistic to the white culture (although perhaps so only on the surface). However, as a broader socio-economic range of blacks began to attend the congregation, so cultural differences became more apparent.

9.6.4 Orientations to Human Nature and God

The next question of Kluckhorn and Stodtbeck asked how humanity related to nature. Do human beings have control over nature, or do they have to adjust themselves to it? Is nature something to be technically controlled or spiritually controlled? (See also Condon and Yousef 1975.)

Once again, there are deep cultural differences. Obviously, in traditional African thinking, nature is more spiritually controlled than technically controlled. Within a more rural African setting, white man's medicine is almost "magic" in its quality. However, within the urban setting this did not usually appear to be the case. A few members referred to the fact that blacks will sometimes go to a traditional healer when modern medicine does not appear to be succeeding. And one girl from Lesotho explained that she had to go home for a family gathering to appease the ancestors because of the amount of "bad luck" they were having. However, most blacks in (sub)urban congregations did not seem as dependent on "ancestor worship" or appeasement approaches to nature.

What was notable was the increased "spirituality" of the blacks in contrast with the whites. Many whites noted this fact and were glad that blacks had brought a greater spiritual depth to the congregation. Whites noted in interviews that blacks appeared to share their faith with greater ease, and more naturally talked about the role of religion and God in their lives. The technical approach to "nature" and "God" seemed to have "secularized" whites so that most of their conversation about God only occurred on Sabbath mornings in the congregation. This dichotomy between the sacred and the secular did not seem as prevalent in the black cultures.

A final area which Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck addressed was how a culture relates to time. Condon and Yousef build on their work to ask particular questions as to whether time is linear (technical society) or cyclical (agricultural society). They also ask whether time is scarce and measurable or unlimited and undifferentiated. Lingenfelter and Mayers identify a continuum that ranges from time-orientation to event-orientation (1986:37-52). In a time-oriented culture there is a concern for punctuality, a careful allotment of time, schedules, goals and an emphasis on dates. In an event-oriented culture, there is a concern for details of the event, regardless of the time required, a lack of schedules and an emphasis on present experience rather than past or future performance (ibid.).

In some cases there were no surprises, with whites being very time-oriented and blacks generally being event-oriented (see similar conclusions in Peart 2000:88). Whites generally were very specific about being "on time" and ending "on time." Blacks tended to be much more event-oriented, arriving late but staying at church the whole day. However, at Sandton, where most blacks were young professionals, there was very little racial difference on the question of being "on time," suggesting that this was a result of technical control more than of racial culture. Since blacks at Sandton had the technical ability to be "on time" (due to their owning transportation, cell phones, etc.), they were as concerned about timeliness as whites were. However, at Umbilo, when blacks arrive late for a Sabbath School program even when

they were in charge, they sometimes came late because they did not have control over whether their bus would be on time, and hence had no control over "being on time."

Studies in culture also suggest that different cultures have different amounts of time that a person could be "late and still on time" for an event. Highly western cultures tend to keep this at less than five minutes, whereas other cultures may allow as much as one to two hours (ibid.). In some cultures, as an important person, you cannot be late, as the event will not start until you arrive. And in such cultures, you are not late if you arrive before the most important person arrives. An example of this occurs when a black pastor has three weddings to perform in one day. He cannot be at all three weddings "on time," so the wedding party will often wait until the pastor arrives, which can be two to three hours beyond the scheduled time. White culture will allow a curtailed use of this privilege for the bride, but not for the minister (generally).

9.6.5 Conclusions on Orientations

This exploration of cultural values is not exhaustive, nor was it intended to be. Rather, by using the cultural taxonomies of Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck (as well as others), the aim has been to further understand the social processes taking place in the congregations undergoing transition. It seems that while the different cultures have an intuitive understanding of these differences, because people do not often talk about them, they are at times operating either from (a) unmet expectations (leading to cultural conflict) or (b) stereotypes that may or may not be accurate.

A second observation that has grown out of this study is that while racial differences are important in indicating cultural values, the impact of westernism and wealth on existing racial cultures is at least as equally important. Thus, dynamics of racial culture and values are somewhat unpredictable, especially with young people.

The most significant differences between the cultures appeared to centre round the individualistic-collectivistic continuum. It could be argued that this is the contributing factor to all the other continuums, and it certainly seems to indicate the largest difference between the cultures in the congregations studied.

9.7 RACIAL ATTITUDES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CONGREGATION

However, the impact of race on the congregation is not limited simply to cultural values. It includes the way that different cultures see each other. Racial perceptions, prejudices and attitudes directly and indirectly affect congregational ethos and direction. In this section we assess the impact of these racial forces on the congregation.

Overall, there appeared to be a fairly positive attitude among the churches toward other races as a result of racial transition.[84] Other studies have shown the advantage of racially mixed churches in improving interracial attitudes and interaction (see Yancey 2003:41), and this conclusion appears to be validated by the positive racial climate in each church. For instance, only 10–17 percent of the respondents in each church admitted to strong negative feelings toward other races.

9.7.1 Racial Stereotypes

When whites and blacks were asked to react to racial stereotypes, there appeared to be far less stereotyping than one would expect. The following table identifies who indicated strong or mild agreement with the stereotypical statements asked in the congregational survey. Percentages are derived from actual respondents who answered the question (e.g. ten percent might be calculated from ten mild or strong agreement responses to a statement as compared to ninety neutral or negative responses of that particular race). Analysis has been broken down into black and white responses for the sake of comparison.

Table 5: Comparison of Racial Attitudes

STATEMENT	**SANDTON**		**UMBILO**		**BROOKLYN***	
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
Compared with other racial groups, Whites tend to arrogant.	23%	18%	23%	24%	84%	66%
Blacks are too sensitive about race	71%	29%	65%	48%	42%	100%
Whites tend to be more racist than other groups	19%	28%	20%	29%	41%	28%
There is a difference between races in basic intelligence	22%	17%	13%	14%	Not asked	Not asked
The smell of some races is offensive	22%	3%	26%	17%	Not asked	Not asked
Children of other races are noisy during services	32%	5%	Not asked	Not asked	41%	100%

* Brooklyn's survey generated much smaller responses because of its size, thus skewing the percentages in favour of larger totals.

In general, 80 percent of the respondents did not appear to be overly stereotypical in their view of other races, with one notable exception. Whites tended to see blacks as too sensitive when it came to racial

[84] Of course, this could also be the result of those who had hostile racial feelings leaving the congregation at an early stage in the transition (see section 9.4 above). However, very few "exit interviews" indicated race as the primary reason for leaving a congregation.

issues. This suggests that black racial pain resulting from apartheid had not been successfully dealt with in these congregations. A fairly large percentage of blacks appeared to recognize this tendency and indicated their agreement with this statement. Thus this stereotype probably represents a reality of black racial sensitivity in each congregation, but that sensitivity is itself founded on a history of racial injustice. A smaller number of blacks and whites recognized a problem with white arrogance and racism, suggesting that this stereotype, while significant, is not as powerful as the so-called "reverse racism" of black sensitivity.

While the question of black children being noisy was not in the first survey done at Umbilo, interviews validated that this was a perception of whites in that congregation (hence its inclusion in the later surveys at Brooklyn and Sandton). This is the other significant stereotype that operates in all three churches.

Thus, while there were generally positive attitudes displayed between the races in all three congregations, there were also hidden racial attitudes that remained challenging for these congregations. It appears that none of these congregations have engaged in any kind of active reconciliation process, and therefore these hidden attitudes and sensitivities are left to fester and ultimately potentially ruin racial relationships in the church.

Peart notes that churches sometimes have a false sense of self-sufficiency, believing that reconciliation is optional, and that ignoring it will cause no ill effects. However, he notes that we ignore reconciliation to our detriment (2000:91). While "the past is the past" to many whites, they need to understand the structural implications of white privilege and its continuing effect upon them (2000:168).

In a similar vein, Peggy McIntosh in "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" argues that we are often taught how race disadvantages others, but not how it gives whites personal and social advantages. White people are socialized "to think of themselves as mentally neutral, normative and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow 'them' to become more like 'us'" (as quoted in Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:10). Thus reconciliation is more than simply making friends across races, but also acknowledging and working through dimensions of structural racism.

Likewise, David Anderson argues that whites and blacks need to spend time getting to know each other's fears, and building trust between the races (2004:42-48), while racial reconciliation authors Washington and Kehrein talk about an intentionality in communities of reconciliation that is not "color blind" (1993:133).

9.7.2 Black Distrust and White Fears

The ravages of apartheid left a number of blacks inherently suspicious of whites. Blacks suspected that whites wanted to hold onto power and privilege, and they wondered if the whites had been genuinely converted. A number of blacks wondered if whites had really changed since the days of apartheid, or whether their racism had simply "gone underground." Part of this distrust stemmed from the fact that whites appeared to be unwilling to talk about the injustices of the past (only at Brooklyn did a majority of whites indicate that they wished to talk more about racial issues). Blacks wondered how reconciliation was possible without repentance.

The interviews indicated that when whites appeared to be conciliatory, many blacks wondered whether they really meant it or were just being "politically correct." The net result was that a number of blacks distrusted whites.

But if a number of black people's attitudes in these congregations can be described as distrustful, then a number of white people's attitudes can be described as fearful. White fears could be grouped into the following categories:

1. Family—whites were concerned that the church was becoming irrelevant to their children in its programming, makeup, social activities and religious meaning provided. While not all of this was race-related, some of it clearly was. Comments such as "There's no one in the church for them to marry," even though there were many black youth, and, "They just don't seem to fit in anymore," indicated a feeling that the "black" and "mixed" church had no place for white youth.
2. Friends—whites feared the loss of their support group in the church as the white exodus started to impact on the church, leaving a number of whites feeling lonely and isolated.
3. Finances—whites feared that the church would not have sufficient financial support from the black members, and that there would be inadequate finances to cover the costs of the buildings and activities. Some of the whites felt that some of the blacks were getting a "free ride." There was talk of blacks leaving their children at the white church and going on to worship at a nearby black church because the "white church" program was better. This left some of the white members feeling used and frustrated. They expressed fears about this "charity" mentality.
4. Property—some whites feared that blacks were trying to take over property for which whites had worked long and hard. They saw the growth of black members as orchestrated to push whites out of churches. Other whites feared that some of the poorer blacks would be unable to look after property because they were not used to it. They feared that the pianos would be destroyed and the buildings would not be properly tended.

5. White evangelism—whites feared that their ability to reach white friends and neighbours would be curtailed as the congregation became more black.
6. Control—some whites feared that blacks would use the cry "racism!" as an excuse to get their way (see Peart 2000:90), and to take over church leadership and worship services.
7. Social Events—some whites feared social events would only relate to black cultures in the future, and that these events would become irrelevant to whites.

9.7.3 Racial Interaction and Racial Attitudes

Inter-racial contact was generally very positive in each church, with people of all races indicating minimal experiences of discrimination at the church. However, actual cultural interaction was still somewhat limited in each church, even though a fairly high percentage indicated a willingness to invite people into their homes. Only about half of the respondents felt that cultures mixed well at Umbilo and Sandton, and this was reflected in actual practice, where very little mixing outside of the services could be noted. Part of the reluctance in being proactive in mixing is related to the belief (largely among whites) that mixing within one's own social group is preference, not prejudice. Thus, whites were not inclined to undergo the discomfort of socializing among other groups except for on limited occasions (such as church services).

The importance of inclusive leadership can be seen particularly at Umbilo where positive responses from all races were indicated. At each church the inclusive stance of the pastors and elders (in general, as Sandton had a couple of exceptions) has helped each church weather transition with little racial hostility. However, the possibility of having a pastor of a different race over the congregation was still only partially accepted by whites.

Programming outside of the church services has remained somewhat racially divided, and inclusivity in these programs has not generally succeeded. Programs that remained racially mixed for a while seemed to become predominantly black in a short period of time, suggesting that racial integration is more of an ideal than a practical intention. Whites generally feel that social events are inclusive of all races, whereas blacks are less certain, either because whites do not attend or because they feel excluded from certain of the white events.

The following table breaks down some of this information according to statements with which respondents in each church indicated they had strong or mild agreement.

Table 6: Racial Mixing and Inclusivity

STATEMENT	SANDTON		UMBILO		BROOKLYN*	
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
I have experienced discrimination at this church	8%	15%	Not asked	Not asked	6%	29%
Would feel uncomfortable attending a campmeeting which is predominantly of another racial grouping	41%	25%	41%	32%	22%	0%
This will be a black church in five years	60%	29%	63%	25%	32%	14%
Comfortable inviting other races into my home	61%	42%	41%	38%	58%	71%
Uncomfortable if a child dates someone of another race	66%	15%	50%	21%	38%	0%
People mixing mainly with their own race is preference not prejudice	81%	35%	70%	58%	80%	50%
Interracial contact in the church has been positive	78%	55%	86%	64%	88%	71%
Leaders are inclusive of other races	63%	55%	97%	73%	88%	50%
Comfortable with pastor of any race over this church	58%	71%	47%	70%	90%	86%
Social events are inclusive of all cultures	78%	47%	75%	46%	78%	43%
Would prefer to move if my race made up less than 20% of this congregation	38%	11%	30%	8%	11%	0%
Comfortable in bringing friends to church	63%	66%	55%	71%	84%	71%
Too much time spent talking about race issues	38%	6%	39%	5%	11%	13%
Cultures mix well at this church	44%	53%	64%	53%	100%	71%

* Brooklyn's survey generated much smaller responses because of its size, thus skewing the percentages.

Further integration remains somewhat uncertain. Whites generally feel that each of their churches will become a "black church" in the future. Blacks feel optimistic that the churches will remain mixed. It was postulated earlier that this was probably because whites feel that accepting a church of colour is a racially mature approach, whereas blacks feel that accepting that the church will become black suggests that the racial experience of integration has failed.

Finally, as we examine racial integration, we note the stark differences between races when it comes to dating. Whereas most blacks feel comfortable with racially mixed dating, most whites feel fairly uncomfortable with it. Some of the older whites in each congregation expressed strong sentiments against this practice. This suggests that racial mixing, while generally regarded positively among whites, has limits in their minds that are not perceived as significant by blacks.

These figures suggest that although the racial climate is positive in these churches, racial reconciliation and integration have not be fully achieved and may need to be given further attention.

9.8 ASSESSING COMMON CHALLENGES

Congregations which are undergoing racial transition face particular challenges with which homogenous congregations do not have to concern themselves. As the culture of the church changes, so its fundamental identity is impacted. However, the three congregations in this study generally did not deal with issues of race. Rather, race remained a background discussion that affected other issues. These congregations dealt with leadership, programs, conflict issues, etc. that affect all churches, but did not often discuss race and its impact. However, through the surveys and interviews, it became clear that the very narrative and life of the church was being shaped by racial issues.

9.8.1 Continuing and Rapid Racial Change

Perhaps the most fundamental way in which race is impacting on these congregations is clearly seen by their changing demographic profile. Ten years ago these congregations were mostly white, and looked like they would remain that way. Within a few short years, whites became the minority in these congregations, and it appears that the colour shift is gaining momentum. In all three congregations, there has been a significant loss of white youth and an increasing number of black and coloured members. An older white contingent has remained and helps form the core of the church. Thus, while white numbers remain the same, black attendance has increased dramatically in the last three years. In two of the churches, visitors almost outnumber members, and almost all of these visitors are black. Only at Brooklyn has the racial change slowed and stabilized.

Emerson and Smith discuss a number of the challenges facing a church attempting to remain multiracial over an extended period of time. These challenges include issues such as maintenance of boundaries, protecting group solidarity, how the status quo drives congregations toward being divided, and how congregations grow among people who are "like us" (2000). All of these factors help push congregations back to homogeneity.

Table 7: Attending Members in October 2001 and December 2004

	SANDTON		UMBILO		BROOKLYN	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
Black Adults	87	191	72	130	13	14
White Adults	68	58	61	66	23	20
Adults of Other Races	34	37	15	24	6	8
Black Youth		18		20	8	9
White Youth		10		4	1	1
Youth of Other Races		1		6	3	6

External factors such as changing suburban neighbourhoods, black immigration and a growing black student population continue to impact on each congregation. When this is combined with remote job/study opportunities for white professionals and the general movement of young whites away from the Adventist church, it is clear that these congregations will become more largely black.

In addition to these sociological forces, the denomination's administrative structures in South Africa are also undergoing change. As the regional bodies are placed under pressure to merge into non-racial structures, there will be less emphasis on "minority" campmeetings and racially exclusive gatherings. External church programs, meetings and structures will become increasingly mixed and more black (reflecting the larger constituency). Regional leadership is likely to argue for more black and coloured pastors over previously white churches, particularly as many white ministers seek emigration opportunities aboard. The net effect of these forces may be to move the church back toward black/coloured homogeneity with a residue of white membership and control. This has already happened in a number of churches throughout South Africa.

In the face of this remarkable shift, it is surprising that race is not more openly discussed. Perhaps it is because any discussion of race tends to deal with uncomfortable aspects of racism. Any attempts to define cultural space or discuss cultural issues tend to seem like the resurrection of apartheid. Seemingly positive racial relations help to make congregants feel that race isn't a problem in their church, and therefore isn't worth talking about. However, simple demographics mean that unless something drastic happens, most English-speaking churches in South Africa will become transitional churches that move from being white to being black or coloured over a period of time.[85] Most congregants want the church to continue being a multiracial church, but they do not know how to change this demographic trend (back to homogeneity), since external forces seem to be dictating the rate of change.

[85] According to statistics provided by the Transvaal, Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal Conferences of Seventh-day Adventists, over fifty percent of all white English-speaking churches are undergoing significant racial change. See Table 5.1 for more information.

Why should race receive particular attention? Why not let the church set its missional direction without regard to race, nationality or background? This idealistic approach must be balanced with reference to a realistic perspective of the actual impact of race on the congregation. Race is often indicative of cultural differences, and this is why new racial influxes affect the congregational narrative so intensely.[86]

9.8.2 Loss of Mission and Identity

In all three congregations, evidence of a loss of mission was seen, even when actual survey results indicated that people liked the mission of the church. In interviews, very few people were sure of what the mission of the church was, and it became apparent that although people were attracted to the church, it did not appear to have a compelling vision for their lives. It seems that mission is difficult to define when a church is undergoing transition. The church is unsure of how to connect with its new immigrant population while grappling with the challenge of the disappearance of white youth.

Blacks were unsure of their identity in what they perceived as a "white church," and whites were unsure of their identity in what they saw as a church that was changing to where it no longer belonged to them. Blacks enjoyed attending the church but were often unsure about moving their membership there. Whites tended to stay in control of the church (as typically happens—DeYoung et al. 2003:171) and yet felt frustrated at times that they couldn't share the leadership and have greater participation from black members. The net result was that the churches were unsure of how to move forward with so many groups needing to find their identity in the congregation.

One of the challenges of a multiracial congregation is that people tend to assume that their perceptions are shared by everyone in the congregation (DeYoung et al. 2003:174). Thus, churches tend toward assimilation rather than integration.

9.8.3 Loss of Evangelism

The other significant challenge that these churches face is the loss of evangelistic vision and programming. It was postulated that this appears to be because they are unsure of how to do evangelism effectively. If the church engages in evangelism, it will most likely result in more blacks than whites attending, which enhances the feeling of whites being "swamped." Whites in the churches would like to reach out to their white friends, but seem uncertain of how to do so and also uncertain whether their friends will want to attend a predominantly black church. Blacks, on the other hand, see their church

[86] Peter Blau shows that race in the United States (and probably in South Africa as well) is a "consolidated characteristic." Blau and Schwartz show that race is the most consolidated characteristic of all and is statistically connected with differences in education, wealth, income and various cultural practices (Blau 1977, 1987, 1994 and Blau and Schwartz 1984).

growing without significant evangelistic effort, and so even though they want to engage in evangelism, they are willing to live without it. Whites prefer personal evangelistic methods, while blacks prefer public evangelistic methods. This is probably related to the same racial reasons described above, since blacks will be more likely to attend a public evangelistic event, and whites want to witness to their friends in more individualistic ways.

9.8.4 Worship Wars and Cultural Issues

Worship is yet another challenge in these congregations, although Brooklyn appeared to have the least antagonism over this issue. In general, blacks indicated in interviews and the surveys that they liked more spontaneous and exuberant preaching and worship. Black students, for instance, felt that the worship style at Umbilo was too stifled. In Sandton, this dichotomy was handled by having two services—a solution that seems to have worked well, although the second service has become largely black. Whites who seemed to have a positive racial outlook were more likely to be open to black "vernacular" choruses (e.g. at Brooklyn). Challenges in worship thus are not determinative, but significant for the local church.

Similar challenges have been noted in other multicultural churches. Riverside Church in New York City is one example. A strong multiracial and affluent church with pastoral roots going back to the well-known preachers Fosdick and McCracken, Riverside now has an African American pastor, James A. Forbes Jr. When he first arrived at Riverside, the congregation was approximately 60 percent white and 40 percent African American. Now, the congregational membership "seems to have stabilized" at about 65 percent African American and 35 percent white, with a sprinkling of people of Asian and Latino backgrounds (DeYoung et al. 2003:79).

DeYoung et al. comment on the challenge of racial transition in the church: "Although Forbes was welcomed enthusiastically by most of the congregation, the church had had to come to terms with racial and cultural differences" (2003:81). They mention that these differences have had to do with how Forbes preaches, using a more dynamic and audience-responsive style. As a result, the church held meetings in which the white members asked the pastor to discourage people from responding because the responsive approach made them feel like they were at a "show." White members expected services to last an hour, while black members preferred longer services. (The church at last compromised on a service of an hour and a half.) There were differences in music style as well, resulting in two choirs being formed, one almost exclusively black (the inspirational choir) and the other largely white (the main choir) (DeYoung et al. 2003:80-81). Thus, this church demonstrates that a multicultural church is about a people who must engage in a constant give and take as they grapple with their cultural identity and worship space:

> A truly diverse congregation where anybody enjoys more than 75 percent of what's going on is not thoroughly integrated. So, if you're going to be an integrated church you have to be prepared to

> think, "Hey, this is great, I enjoyed at least 75 percent of it," because 25 percent you should grant for somebody's previous liturgical expression that is probably odious to you; otherwise it's not integrating. So an integrating church is characterized by the need to be content with less than total satisfaction with everything. You have to factor in a willingness to absorb some things that are not dear to you but may be precious to some of those coming in (Forbes as quoted in DeYoung et al. 2003:82; see also ibid. 176).

The following table indicates that while worship is generally appreciated by all racial groups in the churches, blacks are less attracted to the traditional worship style that the whites warmly appreciate. However, it also shows a surprising observation that some whites are more likely to want "loud and expressive 'amens'" than blacks in their congregation.

Table 8: Racial Attitudes Toward Worship

STATEMENT	**SANDTON**		**UMBILO**		**BROOKLYN***	
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
The worship style of this church is attractive	87%	76%	83%	54%	90%	86%
Like loud and expressive "Amens"	30%	57%	62%	52%	42%	57%
Like to use more "vernacular" choruses	26%	38%	14%	48%	79%	57%

* Brooklyn's survey generated much smaller responses because of its size, thus skewing the percentages.

In interviews, several people indicated challenges with worship and cultural issues. There was a concern about reverence in the church at Umbilo, specifically about how black children would "run wild" during services. Some whites expressed a desire for a "heavenly culture of worship," and some blacks expressed frustration at the regimented services. Some of the whites felt that African worship was inherently pagan while traditional white worship was more biblical. At Sandton there was a concern that younger blacks did not keep Adventist standards, and that the second service was too liberal in its worship style. Only at Brooklyn did there appear to be a way to negotiate cultural differences and thus to solve cultural conflict.

Every cultural group in these churches has widely accessible patterns of symbolic meaning as well as personal cultural aspects. In addition there are likely to be contested zones of meaning where cultural values are under negotiation (Martin and Nakayama 2000:79). In each of these churches we have seen that negotiation of shared cultural values on both the personal and supracultural level remains a challenge.

9.8.5 Leadership Issues

Leadership challenges varied from church to church. At Sandton the few core members in leadership felt burnt out and overloaded with having to carry the responsibilities of a large church. The transitioning of leadership to black members was slowly taking place, but not fast enough to prevent burnout. Some of these leaders were founders of the church who felt that they had "lost" their church to the blacks. Hence leadership reflected issues of ownership.

At Umbilo, leadership and control have undergone several "changes of the guard." At one stage, an older white patriarchy held the reins. Then under Edgar Nunes and Michael Faber, this shifted to a younger and middle-aged group. Following this, a number of professional black immigrants moved into leadership positions, and when they left, local black South Africans have come into key positions such as elders and Sabbath School superintendents. Maintaining consistency and vision across these "eras" of the church has proved challenging. One of the difficulties of leadership when there is constant change is how to meaningfully involve different people groups when the leaders with whom they have connected keep leaving. As a result, Umbilo also has a core group of leaders who keep the church functioning. However, of all the churches, Umbilo had the most racially integrated leadership.

At Brooklyn, leadership has largely remained in the hands of the whites, but significant attempts to involve blacks and coloureds have been made. Most people seem happy with the inclusivity of leaders in the church, but the leaders do not appear to be highly proactive in developing a vision for the church.

DeYoung et. al. state that a key barrier to becoming a multicultural church is a lack of leadership. They argue that leaders need to be committed to the vision of a multiracial church and need to lead integrated, multiracial lives (2003:170).

A final challenge of leadership remains in the area of decision-making. People outside of the areas of control tend to feel isolated and marginalized. As blacks continue to become the majority in the church, it will be important to practice leadership that embraces the minority and does not depend on simply majority-minority decision processes. Foster suggests the need for "decision making strategies that require the participation and contribution of all people and groups," in which, "decisions are built instead of made" (Foster 1997:18). In a similar vein, Palmer argues for decisions by consensus based on "the sense of the meeting" as a way to bring in diversity (1985:127). He also feels that we should develop a "liturgy for decision-making" (ibid).

> In such a ritual we would be reminded of the common faith in which conflict occurs; we would seek to approach the decision in the open, attentive and receptive manner of prayer; we would be invited to recall times when our own opinions proved aggressively wrong-headed; we would pray together for forgiveness of our biases and the grace to understand each other's points of view. In the midst of such a liturgy, it would also be important to call for periods of silent meditation as the decision was being made. So often we heighten our conflicts by trying to 'talk them out,' only to end up in a warfare of words. Where words divide us, silence can unite us, for in that silence people can sort and sift their passions and be given opportunities to hear beyond the words (Palmer 1985:127).

9.8.6 Conclusions

This brief overview of common challenges indicates that while a positive racial environment has been achieved in each congregation, racial transition has created a number of crises. Racial change has impacted on the vision and mission of the congregation, its evangelistic outreach, its worship and its leadership. And, except at Brooklyn, there are no signs that racial change is likely to slow down.

9.9 ASSESSING CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCES AND STRENGTHS

In this section, we will look more closely at how particular strengths and resources have helped each congregation more successfully handle the transition to heterogeneity. Identifying these strengths was done both through congregational surveys as well as in church boards. In addition, analysis was made of the congregations based on interviews and the researcher's personal observations. We will look at these strengths and resources critically, assessing their value and their limitations for the congregations.

9.9.1 A Culture of Acceptance

In all three congregations there was a culture of acceptance. At Sandton this was the result of Ian Hartley's "grace theology" and its influence on especially the young professionals in the church; at Umbilo it was the result of relationship-oriented people, who were more tolerant of differences, moving into leadership positions; at Brooklyn it was created by the laid-back and come-as-you-are climate of the church. The churches were therefore inviting and hospitable to incoming blacks and other people of colour. All three congregations were seen by their attendees, of all races, to be warm and welcoming.

However, we also note the limits of this culture of acceptance. Refugees were assisted and welcomed but did not become part of the life of the church. Immigrants were acknowledged and treated cordially, but were sometimes isolated and friendless. Only if they attended the church for a number of years could they expect to become involved and given leadership. People of colour were not given a hostile reception, but neither were they always given an inclusive embrace.

9.9.2 A Common Language

Language was generally a uniting force rather than a dividing force for these congregations which became multiracial precisely because of their use of English. Particularly for foreigners, their inability to speak any South African language other than English necessitated that they join an English-speaking congregation. The use of a common language meant exposure to preachers of other races and cultures. It also meant the ability to sing common hymns and choruses of praise and worship thus uniting the congregation in their worship. Because people communicated without interpreters, it meant that cultural

confusion between the races was less noticeable in these congregations. People could think and express themselves in understandable conceptual terms.

However, having a common language also had its limits. Attempts to pray or sing in other languages were generally frowned upon by white and even some black members. Preaching with the use of an interpreter was considered unthinkable for a Sabbath Service. At Umbilo, for instance, many whites stated that, "This is an English church." It was so strongly part of their identity that other people's languages and therefore their cultures were not given a place at the table. The continued and virtually exclusive use of English has meant that other cultures have tended to assimilate to white worship styles instead of bringing their own unique richness.

Another challenge for English-speaking churches is that those who use English as a second language do not feel adequate. Some of the black members did not want to accept positions in the church because they felt they did not have the linguistic ability to speak up front or to teach a children's Sabbath School. And when they did lead out in these areas, then someone would inevitably complain and confirm the black teacher's insecurities.

Thus, while language is generally a uniting force, it has also served to limit and frustrate diversity in the congregation.

9.9.3 Strong Leadership

In different ways, each congregation has demonstrated strong leadership. Umbilo generally had strong and stabilising pastors who held the congregation together during cultural change. As a result, many members of all races had a strong, positive regard for the leadership role of the pastor. Both blacks and whites indicated that they enjoyed the pastoral leadership in the congregation, and this was a unifying factor. This pastoral leadership was complemented by lay leaders that embraced diversity and were competent in organizing programming and events. New black leaders were highly professional and quickly gained the respect of whites.

At Brooklyn, most of the lay leaders had been around for over a decade. While pastoral leadership was less important due to the rapid turnover of pastors serving the congregation, lay leadership had nevertheless maintained the welcoming and open culture of Brooklyn. The fact that these leaders appeared to be unconcerned about racial change helped the rest of the congregation to accept it more readily. Black and coloured leaders who joined the congregation reflected this same culture of openness and flexibility.

At Sandton, leadership was highly professional and, in their terms, had "a lot of talent." People were attracted to the vibrancy and charisma of Sandton's leaders. New black leaders were also well-liked and professional, and some of the black lay preachers were exceptional. This helped win the admiration of the whites and also increased the number of black people attending the Sabbath services. Some of the white leaders at Sandton, particularly from the second service, were very inclusive and welcoming of blacks, making them feel at home.

However, leadership also had its challenges, as noted in section 9.8.5. In a changing congregational environment, it appeared that the new membership was reluctant to get involved, and a core group ended up doing most of the tasks in the church, leading to leadership burnout. Part of the challenge of having strong leadership was also that people did not feel adequate in getting involved when they perceived that someone more competent than themselves could do the job. Yet another challenge was that, in the minds of some whites, some of the early black leaders became the "official" spokespersons for black culture. The views of these were assumed to be the views of all blacks in the congregation, thus minimizing or downplaying black diversity.

9.9.4 Members with Previous Multicultural Experience

Another strength that figured predominantly at Brooklyn was the positive experience of members' previous multicultural experiences. Those that had grown up in racially mixed environments were generally more accepting of racial change in the church. They appeared to undergo less "culture shock," and were more embracing of diversity. The same could be said for black immigrants who came into white churches. Many of them had received their education in racially mixed environments and were comfortable in relating to both white and black cultures.

Those with previous experience in a multicultural environment often developed cross-racial friendships, some of them very close and binding, thus modelling intercultural relationships to the rest of the church. They also served as "ethnic brokers"—that is, people who could draw the different ethnic and cultural groups into a shared understanding. Living between the two worlds, they were able to relate to people on both sides.

However, even this previous experience in multiracial environments could be a drawback. Some of the leaders felt confident in drawing assessments and judgements in reference to the other race, because, in their minds, "We know these people." Thus, their previous exposure to other races sometimes resulted in their being overly sure of their own interpretations of another culture. Another challenge was that previous racial experiences had sometimes been negative, reinforcing the belief that the other race was not to be trusted.

The value of previous multicultural experience is therefore dependent on the attitude with which one approaches another race, and necessitates continued humility and openness. However, with this in mind, those with positive previous multicultural experience can be a resource and advantage for congregations undergoing transition.

9.9.5 Attractive Worship Services

Another area which seemed to be a strong point in handling transition in all three congregations was having attractive worship services. At Sandton, this was most prominent with the introduction of the second worship service, which from its inception was professional, vibrant and innovative. Having two worship services meant that diversity in worship styles could be tolerated because those who wanted a more formal worship could attend the first service. The two worship styles thus brought in new people without alienating older members.

At Umbilo, the worship is warm and friendly even though it is somewhat conservative. Black attendees mentioned in both surveys and interviews that Umbilo was very "organized," and they appreciated "how well run the services were." Comments on the worship service were generally positive, although some of the younger blacks thought that it needed more spontaneity. The involvement of different races in the worship service made it feel welcoming to all cultures. Part of the attraction of Umbilo for immigrants was that it was conservative, since many immigrants are more conservative (in worship) than local black South Africans.

At Brooklyn, the worship service is more family-oriented, with sharing and testimonies. This has created a comfortable space for people to feel welcomed and part of the congregation. The worship style blends a mixture of old and new in a way that doesn't alienate its more conservative members (since blacks tend to be more conservative than whites).

However, while the worship style was generally attractive, one of its limitations as a resource for diversity is that it is very hard to please everyone when it comes to creating a worship culture. Some people felt that it was important to develop a specific worship culture (some argued for contemporary and others traditional) that would be attractive to people of all races. A few argued for an inclusive worship culture that allowed a great deal of diversity and attempted to cater for most people (and their diverse tastes) at least some of the time. Sometimes worship was not a unifying factor but a divisive one (see section 9.8.4).

Thus, having an attractive worship style is useful for a congregation in attracting people of different races, but can also be a possible source of friction and difficulty.

9.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have taken the philosophical point of view that there are both etic and emic aspects involved in social analysis. As such, our analysis involved in-depth views of particular congregations as well as broader models and issues arising from all three congregations. We looked at the reasons why these congregations started their journey to heterogeneity and concluded that it was because of a complex mixture of socio-political forces such as immigration and the changing South Africa, as well as an internal ethic of inclusiveness and acceptance. We then proposed both a psycho-cultural model and a congregational model of how congregations undergo transition to heterogeneity. These models emphasized cultural adaptation and integration respectively.

Our analysis also covered racial attitudes and integration in each of the three churches. We found that while positive racial attitudes existed, underlying black distrust, white fears and other reconciliation issues needed to be addressed. Common challenges remain in congregations undergoing transition to heterogeneity, and these include continuing racial change, mission and identity issues, evangelism issues, leadership issues and worship issues. However, we also noted that the congregations have internal strengths and resources that have helped them to successfully weather transition to heterogeneity. These included an accepting culture, a common language, strong leadership, members with previous multicultural experience and an attractive worship service.

CHAPTER TEN: *THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE*

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation would be incomplete if it only considered the church from the perspective of a social institution. It would tell only half the story if it simply gave a descriptive model of the church in transition. To tell the complete story of these churches we must turn the coin over, so to speak, and look at the image of the One who gives the church its authority. What is the nature of the church? In seeing the tracing of God and His mission upon these churches we are enabled to say not only what the church *is* but also what it *should be*. The church, considered from below, must grapple with the realities of social complexities and pragmatic change. The church, considered from above, must be true to its calling—it is called to be a transforming witness to the power of an indwelling God in our midst.

In this sense, the *missional church* (Guder 1998) can never separate evangelism from the evangel. It must promote the gospel in a way that it is in harmony with that same gospel. It must both speak to a culture and transform it. It must work within a culture and yet rise above it. It must speak in particulars, yet grapple with universals. The task of the church is to listen to its social context and yet not be bound by it.

The focus of this chapter is to provide an answer to the question, *what is God's intention for a faith community in transition to heterogeneity?* This question will be shaped and framed by the sociological analysis of the previous chapter. While we attempt to speak a "divine word from above," our answer must nevertheless consider the context of the question "from below." Using theological reflection upon the authoritative witness (the Bible) to God's self-revelation (Christ), we will endeavour to outline a narrative that provides direction to congregations in transition. In our next chapter, we will bring this theological reflection to bear on the specific communities that we have studied, and use these communities as the practical lens through which to critique our theological formulae.

Our central question will have many sub-questions relating to areas such as: (a) How do we understand Christ in relation to culture? (b) What is the role of reconciliation in the church? (c) What ecclesial models are there available for churches in transition? (d) How can the church maintain unity in diversity? (e) How far can the church go in accommodating cultural preferences? (f) How does the church relate to the apparently conflicting goals of reaching the "lost" (in ways they can understand) while modelling the kingdom community (in ways that seem foreign to them)? To answer these questions requires much more than a sociological analysis. It requires a deep searching and a theological quest, because in our answers we wish to know God's intention for these communities. It is, as such, a spiritual quest, and therefore one that requires humility and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As we turn our attention now to the question of formulating a theology[87] for a church in transition, we recognize the immensity of our task. Our theology must be grounded in praxis, yet open to the coming God. It must simultaneously understand the human makeup and the divine call. While we must grapple with pragmatic concerns, we need to see a reality which transcends our human limitations—the surprising awareness that God's kingdom is already among us.

10.1.1 Theology as Narrative

We noted in Chapter Three that our understanding of God's revelation is shaped by linguistic structures. In each congregation, the power of positive, spiritual change lies in the creation of a new narrative that simultaneously allows diversity while fostering unity. To be effective, this narrative must be thoroughly biblical, relevant and mission-based. It must reflect God's meta-narrative through the ages so that His narrative can redefine our own limited narratives (see Rhodes 1998:146).

The impact of God's narrative on our personal narrative leads to what Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson (referring to the work of George W. Stroup) call a "collision of narratives." The new narrative causes disorientation, and a person senses that "the world as he or she has known it is coming apart" (Grenz and Olson 1992:284). However, out of this "collision" arises a new interpretation of one's personal story "in accordance with the categories of the new narrative" (ibid.). This does not necessarily reduce the tension with our old narratives, which are often given to us by the world in which we live. We find ourselves "living between two worlds"—the world of God's story and the world of our everyday societies. We accept the "plausibility structures" of the new narrative while living in dialogue with the plausibility structures of the world (Newbigin 1989:65). Throughout this section, we will be examining the tension and the dialogue between the competing narratives on our lives.

According to Hauerwas, what we require is a "true story" in which "Christians are enabled to see the world accurately and without illusion" (1982:149, 50). But there are no easy routes to finding the "true story," since any telling of the divine narrative is inevitably done in human terms and reinterpreted through subjective lenses. Within congregations in transition there exist both competing narratives and competing praxis. Which one is the "true story"?

Rather than attempting to define the "true story," we will ask, rather, how existing narratives are inadequate, and what possible new narrative can answer the question of praxis we proposed earlier: what is God's intention for a community in transition to heterogeneity? This narrative, while shaping and informing the congregation as it relates to diversity, will also itself be adjusted and deepened as it deals

[87] For further comments on the theological method being used here, please consult Chapter Three.

with new questions of praxis. The narrative will become "true" as it comes into contact with the community of faith in particular situations and as it speaks a "divine word" to those communities.

10.1.2 Theological Narratives and Congregations in Transition

What is God's intention for the church in a multicultural society? What is His call upon churches in South Africa that are undergoing transition and change to heterogeneity? We suggested at the beginning of this dissertation (Chapters Two and Three) that there exists in every congregation a narrative that defines their theology and practice. As churches undergo change, that narrative begins to break down, and new, competing narratives emerge. We predicted that eventually a new compelling narrative would emerge that would refocus the congregation on its task and bind its new community together.

However, during the study of these communities in transition, it became apparent that in each case no new narrative had arisen, and that mission, evangelism and church socializing were at an all-time low. This was in spite of the fact that these churches generally saw themselves as warm, welcoming and dynamic. Cultural changes, while not shattering the congregation's sense of purpose, seemed to have blurred it. Many cultural groupings in the church felt a loss of identity and sought in some way to reclaim that identity within the new congregational dynamics. There is a need for new narrative to answer this loss of identity, but current narratives appear to be inadequate.

10.2 HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Two particularly powerful narratives have existed side-by-side in South African thinking. These two narratives have largely determined how South Africans approach the problems of cultural diversity. The first narrative is what could be called the narrative of difference, and the second is what could be termed the narrative of unity. Both, of course, are legitimate biblical narratives, but both became ideological landmines in South African theological thinking. This is because these narratives, instead of remaining in tension with one another, have been divided and promoted as conclusive narratives in their own right. The first narrative was able to prevail for many years through socio-political pressure. The second narrative has become more powerful in recent years as the structure of the first narrative has been challenged by changing socio-political circumstances.

10.2.1 The Narrative of Difference

The narrative of difference has been seen from vastly different perspectives, depending on whether one was a member of the privileged (white) elite or the historically oppressed (black) majority. From the perspective of the white elite, during apartheid the narrative of difference (though touted otherwise) became a policy of "separate and unequal." From schools to public restrooms, the discrepancy between "white" and "non-white" facilities was obvious. The policy of "separate development" suggested that the

races were so different that they needed to be quarantined from each other except for limited working contact. The result was the consolidation of power, privilege and economic benefits around whites, and exclusion and discrimination against blacks. For theology it resulted in "white supremacist" theology which attempted to base white superiority on biblical texts such as the cursing of Cain and of Ham and his generations. The narrative of difference became the practice of exclusion.

Blacks, tired of fighting for ways to participate in the socio-economic environment in South Africa, also developed a narrative of difference. However, their perspective was one of "separate but equal." The concern among some black theologians was to show the importance of African culture and tradition in what was termed "African theology" (e.g. Setiloane 1988 and Pato in de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, editors 1994:152-161). For others, there was a more critical engagement with the socio-political order in South Africa. The rise of "black theology" was the attempt to claim political and theological space for blacks to participate in society. From this perspective, the argument was made that it was impossible for whites to understand black experience. In this narrative the hermeneutic was liberation from oppression rather than the maintenance of privilege. Many whites complained that "black theology" and "black consciousness" was reverse discrimination, but some came to see that they had misunderstood the nature of black politics of difference (see Woods on Steve Biko 1987). However, for those who lived by this narrative, ultimately it often alienated rather than reconciled.

The narrative of difference is not as powerful and persuasive as it used to be. It has been overtaken, to some extent, by changing socio-economic and political forces, which have broken down the arguments for the impossibility of multiculturalism. As schools, work places and media portrayals have become more integrated, so the reasons for clinging to a narrative of difference lose their force. However, rather than collapsing or disappearing, it appears that this narrative has mutated. Whites, generally, no longer hold to strictly exclusivist theologies. Blacks, now that they have greater political and social power, are not working as desperately to create cultural space. But although the strong statements of yesteryear are no longer proclaimed, one can still hear the strains of the narrative of difference in local congregations.

"I don't mind worshipping with black people, but I feel a need to be with people who appreciate the same things I do." "It's not about race, it's a language issue and for us Afrikaners, our language is our culture." "Whites want to have power—they want things their way. If they don't like the fact that we blacks are coming into the church, then they can move on." "I moved to another church because my children couldn't understand the black teachers in the children's department. I like blacks, but we had to move for the sake of keeping my kids in the church." Each of these statements reflects the perceived reality that blacks and whites need places for "separate" development.

Sophisticated forms of the narrative of difference still exist, the most notorious of which is the homogeneous unit principle. This principle states that "people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers" (McGavran 1990:163). In other words, churches should cater for sociological groupings (homogeneous units) in order to engage in evangelism and experience growth. To attempt otherwise is to work against natural sociological principles. Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, both advocates of this principle, are sceptical of churches that advocate heterogeneity. Wagner states, "Although I do not have empirical evidence to confirm it, my impression is that if any truly heterogeneous churches in America are growing, they are exceptions to the general rule" (Wagner 1979:16).

Although the homogeneous principle has been thoroughly critiqued by theologians (see a good example in Fong 1996) and seems to have lost its influence in academia, nevertheless popular lay theology continues to espouse it. The reason is simple. McGavran and Wagner have described a social reality that exists in any divided society. Aristotle once said that "Birds of a feather flock together," and that reality is confirmed by a casual look at most worship services in South Africa. The narrative of difference is founded in the practice of society. What the homogeneous unit principle has done, however, is ascribe theological significance and justification to this narrative. When one reads the Bible from this perspective, as Wagner does, a unique narrative emerges.

In this narrative, the creation of linguistic diversity at the tower of Babel is a sign that the human race should not frustrate the divine purpose for pluralism (Wagner 1979:109). God created ethnic groups as part of His divine plan. Since ethnicity is part of God's purpose, Christ commissioned us (Matthew 28:19-20) to reach ethnic groups in ways that are indigenous to them (ibid. 109-113). For example, Jesus' disciples (except for Judas) were all of one ethnic group, (Galileans) showing that Christ was initially targeting that particular ethnic group in his ministry. When the demoniac of the Gadarenes attempted to follow Christ after his conversion, Jesus sent him back to his own people because he knew "the Gadarene's witness would be much more effective among his own homogeneous unit than among Aramaic-speaking Galileans" (ibid. 118). For the same reason, on their first mission, Jesus told the twelve disciples to go only to the lost sheep of Israel instead of to the Gentiles or Samaritans (ibid.).

When the new church was set up in Jerusalem, there were two distinct groups of believers (Hebrew and Hellenistic Jews) with understandable conflict between them. Since Hellenists were economically superior to the Hebrews, they were bothered about the leadership being in the hands of the Galileans. The decision to elect a group of Hellenists as deacons enabled a distinct mission among them with their own leadership. By keeping the two groups separate, the result was effective growth (ibid. 123). With regard to Jews and Gentiles, at the Jerusalem Council freedom was given to each culture to continue in their own

cultural milieu without requiring them to become Jews, hence supporting the homogeneous unit principle (analysis of McGavran in Fong 1996:25, 26). This is not to say that the Bible does not speak about unity between believers, but such unity does not mean prescribing heterogeneity.[88]

Since multiracial communities remain rather rare in both the United States[89] and in South Africa (Venter 1994), the church growth school (of which McGavran is often considered the founder) seems to have the upper hand in dealing with the reality of sociological growth, for churches do seem to grow naturally among ethnic and racial lines. Even when McGavran and Wagner theologically agree with the model of integration, they see it as impractical in a racially divided society.

> If a given church decides to establish a philosophy of ministry around the principle of becoming a public showcase of socio-cultural integration, it can be done. After all, Christians are filled with the Spirit of Christ. In Christ there is no difference between Jew and Gentile or black and white. Bringing Christians from diverse cultures into a local fellowship will not be an easy job because it will require a degree of cultural circumcision on both sides, but with sufficient dedication, effort, and sacrifice, it can happen. However, when the task is completed, the resulting church will in all probability find itself rather limited as a base for effective evangelization in the future (Wagner 1979:137).

At a lay theological level, there appears to be little attempt to justify the narrative of difference with such thought-out arguments. Instead, questions of social practice dominate the discussion, sometimes resulting in what Joseph Barndt calls cultural racism.[90] Questions were raised by members in the congregation, such as: How can I bring my friends to church if they see it as being of a different colour? What happens if my daughter decides to date someone of another race? My friends are leaving and I don't know if I should stay in this church. Can I trust whites in leadership when they appear to be so racist? Why should I stay in a church where the worship is so dry and formal?

De Young et al. identify these as "pragmatic" reasons for the continuance of homogeneous congregations. In addition, they identify a number of other reasons that largely relate to minorities in the United States, but can be applied with some modification to the situation in South Africa. There are theological reasons (e.g. people of a different colour can affirm their humanity), activist reasons (a place to nurture people in the struggle against racism and injustice), cultural reasons (preventing assimilation and the loss of unique

[88] Donald McGavran sees unity as being fostered in ways that do not affect the basic homogeneous unit as a social entity in the congregation (1990:177).
[89] According to deYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim (2003:2), just 7.5 percent of the over 300,000 religious congregations in the United States are racially mixed (defined as having more than twenty percent of the congregation from a minority race), and for Christian congregations that drops to 5.5 percent.
[90] This happens when people of the dominant group discount members of the non-dominant group and judge their cultural practices as inferior (as quoted in deYoung et al. 2003:171).

cultures), and sociological reasons (refuge from a society dominated by people of a different colour) for why people wish to stay in uniracial churches (2003:127-143).[91]

10.2.2 Critique of the Narrative of Difference

No matter how the narrative of difference is understood, however, the result is the same: exclusion. Strengthening the social boundaries between races serves only to further the distance between races. Ralph H. Elliot shows that the homogeneous unit principle gives sanctity to the unholy status quo, thereby applauding the principle as routine (1982). Rene Padilla agrees:

> Because of its failure to take Biblical theology seriously, it has become a missiology tailor-made for churches and institutions whose main function in society is to reinforce the status quo. What can this missiology say to a church in an American suburb, where the bourgeois is comfortable but remains enslaved to the materialism of a consumer society and blind to the needs of the poor? What can it say to a church where a racist "feels at home" because of the unholy alliance of Christianity with racial segregation? (Padilla in ed. Shenk 1983:301)

Another critique of McGavran's position is that he fails to combine social study with Christian ethics. Cunningham refers to one gospel element missing in the church growth movement when he states,

> Homogeneity misses the major note of reconciliation as the key theme of the Christian Gospel—breaking down the walls of partition between male and female, Jew and Greek, black and white. It does this by evangelising people without the challenge of reconciliation across racial and cultural barriers, and by giving a plural society a false model of what the church as the body of Christ is. In other words the church should not reflect what society is, rather it needs to model what it proclaims that society should become (1988:138).

According to Simon Maimela, white theology in itself has a major problem and is at the root of this narrative of difference.

> Christians have been tempted to believe that differences in languages and cultures are insurmountable absolutes that must be allowed to override any unity in Christ that believers claim they have…. The history of South Africa both past and present, shows that whites have never put into practice their theories about our common human origins (Maimela 1983:50).

Maimela feels that whites have always wanted to separate themselves, and that the Christian faith is used as the strongest tool to divide rather than to weld together and reconcile.

The problem, he argues, is white anthropology. He states that:

[91] They suggest that none of these reasons is adequate in justifying the uniracial congregation, and argue instead that outside of the unique circumstance of first-generation immigrant groups, the church of Christ should model a new form of congregation which will "affirm all people as fully human and created in the image of God, respect a wide range of culturally influenced theological perspectives, address racism in society and in the church, embrace a new *mestizaje* congregational culture, and provide a refuge to all who are battered by racism in society" (de Young et al. 2003:144).

> the white Christian's view of the human self portrays man as a creature who is dominated by self-centred drives, seeking to acquire as much wealth, power and prestige as he can for himself or his group or class, and caring not for others except as they are necessary tools for his personal gratification. True to its Hobbesian (Marxist?) orientation, white anthropology depicts a world in which every human self is the enemy of every other self (Maimela 1983:51).

He further states that white anthropology holds the view that "human interrelations can never be creative and positive because ultimately each human poses a danger to all the others." Hence, whites dwell on the demonic nature of man and on the human readiness to destroy others rather than on the goodwill and readiness among humans to co-operate (ibid. 52).

Maimela argues that biblical anthropology is fundamentally opposed to this view, and that we should stress the fact that we belong to each other are related as brothers and sisters, regarding human relations with others—regardless of race or group affiliations—as potentially nourishing (ibid. 56).

Furthermore, the power of the Spirit of God means that enemies are changed into brothers and sisters, and God can change us into a loving community which becomes the basis of the Christian justification for the proclamation of a positive anthropology (ibid. 57).

DeYoung et al. reinforce this argument by talking about the need to develop parallel communities in a racist society, "places where people who desire to model the racially inclusive community called for in the New Testament find refuge from a racially polarizing society" (2003:141). DeYoung states in an earlier book, *Reconciliation,* that "The reason why Christianity often acts as a dividing wall rather than a uniting force is that instead of modelling the inclusiveness of Jesus Christ, it has mirrored the exclusiveness of society" (1997:33).

In his history of the struggle of the church in South Africa, de Gruchy sees the primary problem as being how to relate to human ideologies. The Afrikaner, in order to break free of British imperialism, developed his own cultural system adequate to the task. This national identity development was supported by the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK). However, this system took on the negative aspects of its ideological system, and *apartheid* was born. "The legitimate aspirations of a people became destructive of the equally legitimate claims of others, and the whole process was given religious justification" (1979:212).

The same can be said to be true of black South Africans, who in order to break free from the chains of apartheid developed black consciousness, which in turn has gained support from the churches. But the problem remains, "how to exist for the people without becoming captive to the ideological system they have espoused" (1979:213). In de Gruchy's later work on Bonhoeffer, he picks up this theme and states:

> African communalism and the very deep-rooted sense of Afrikaner social belonging are important, even primary for the well-being of society, but when ethnicity becomes ideological and nationalist it ends up denying the freedom and liberty of others, and then, in turn, devours the liberties of its own group. At the same time, rampant individualism, which characterizes debased liberalism and which is too often prevalent within the English-speaking community, means that every person exists for himself or herself and not for others, and this is equally destructive of society. It denies social responsibility, creates economic systems that favour a privileged minority, and in the end provokes the anger of the oppressed (1984:79).

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the narrative of difference occurred with the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under Desmond Tutu in South Africa. The reality of how the narratives of exclusion and difference had resulted in violence and crimes of hate against others shocked South Africans and brought a new perspective. At the same time, the remarkable stories of forgiveness inspired a new hope in a reconciliation that could transcend the boundaries between the races and victimization of the past (see Tutu 1999).

The narrative of difference, therefore, seems to go against the heart of the gospel, which calls us to a unity that transcends our differences. During this study, it became apparent that most lay members in South Africa felt uncomfortable openly advocating the narrative of difference. The ravages and evil of apartheid were still too fresh, and the fear of being called racist was too strong for people to feel comfortable in articulating this as their theology. However, many do not have another narrative to replace the one to which they are inadvertently clinging.

10.2.3 The Narrative of Unity

Reaction against the narrative of difference has brought strong emphasis to another narrative—the narrative of unity. While the narrative of difference emphasises our incompatibility, the narrative of unity emphasises our common humanity. Although this narrative was strongly subdued during the apartheid era, it became more prominent during the "honeymoon" period of the new democratic South Africa.

While the narrative of difference is strongly pragmatic, the narrative of unity tends to be strongly idealistic. Based on the theological imperative that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek" (Galatians 3:28), this narrative argues that our unity in Christ transcends our differences.

Some of the strongest theological arguments for this narrative come from Jurgen Moltmann. In Moltmann's earlier works, he identifies cultural diversity as an "evil remnant" that must pass away as a new singular community comes into existence which embraces all the pluralistic communities of the past (*Religion, Revolution and the Future* 1969:27). He thus argues that "National churches, racial churches, class churches, middle class churches, are in the practical life heathenish and heretical" (*The Gospel of*

Liberation 1973:91). Therefore the Christian must choose to break with the national human tendency to observe selective association (*The Church in the Power of the Spirit* 1977). The Christian community exists for the sake of others, and the congregation becomes therefore an open community of acceptance (*The Open Church* 1978).

Moltmann strengthens the narrative of unity by defining it as solidarity:[92]

> Solidarity as a common struggle unites people who are alike in being oppressed [both the victims and perpetrators]. Solidarity as community in the depths unites people who are alike in their suffering. But solidarity in hopeful love goes beyond these limits. Where it exists it turns the unloved into people who are beloved, the repressed into interesting partners, and disagreeable enemies into the loveliest of friends (*The Power of Powerlessness* 1981:111, 112.).

It is the call to Christ's humanity that makes universal our particularities. This universality works against separation. "In the New Testament… mission and care are directed 'without distinction,' to Jews and Gentiles. The call to hope and to participation in the mission here becomes universal" (*Theology of Hope* 1967:286).

The narrative of unity therefore is a powerful critique of the narrative of difference. It reinforces the biblical message of a unity in Christ that transcends differences and makes universal our faith. Those who follow this narrative of unity argue that it must be more than mere rhetoric, and that it should have an impact on the social forms of local Christian communities. As Bruce W. Fong notes, "The Biblical concept of unity results in community [*koinonia*]…. The New Testament resolutely promotes brotherhood not just as a futuristic ideal but as a fact and daily responsibility mandated for all Christians" (Fong 1996:63).

The church is called, not just to espouse a theoretical unity, but to model that unity in its daily congregational practice. The church therefore strives for the ideal even though it recognizes its inability to fully accomplish that ideal in this age.

Biblically, the arguments for the narrative of unity appear much stronger than those for diversity, particularly in the New Testament. In John 17, Jesus prays for the unity of all believers and pleads that "they may be all be one" just as Jesus and the Father are one (John 17:21)—a powerful plea that links human unity with the unity within the Godhead. This unity is based on Christ's own example, and Jesus

[92] In using solidarity as a concept, Moltmann goes further than simply outlining a narrative of unity, since solidarity implies unity across our differences but not against our differences. Any reader of Moltmann will note the constant emphasis on paradox throughout his works, so that when he speaks of unity he simultaneously implies diversity. However, I use Moltmann as a sophisticated example of the narrative of unity because he is so often quoted by those who hold to more simple and idealistic forms of this narrative.

commands his disciples to love one another as he has first loved them (John 13:34; 15:12, 16-17). Any downplaying of the unity of believers is ultimately a downplaying of Christ's own love.

The most famous text on unity is found in Galatians 3:28, "There is no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Here, Paul clearly sees Christ as transcending past distinctions to establish a new narrative of unity. Similar statements are expressed elsewhere (see Romans 10:12 and 1 Corinthians 12:13). We will return to Paul's narrative of unity when we engage in a critical discussion of Paul's theology of universality and particularity. For now, it is sufficient to note that Paul establishes a strong basis for unity, and one that easily lends itself to modern narratives of unity.

Those who espouse the narrative of unity trace a very different narrative in the early church from that identified by Wagner. Although holding to more than a strict narrative of unity, DeYoung et al. trace the inclusive and multicultural ministry of Christ and the early church in an insightful way. They suggest that congregations should strive to be multiracial in the light of the precedent and intention of Jesus' ministry (2003:12).

They note that Jesus is blessed at his birth by Simeon, who declares him to be a "light to the Gentiles," and that this focus on "all nations" is indicated throughout the Gospels. Jesus, for instance, grows up in Galilee "of the Gentiles," and that in his childhood he would certainly have rubbed shoulders with Gentiles (14, 15). They note his inclusive table fellowship (see section 10:4.6) and how often he interacted with, touched and ate with Gentiles, including the feeding of the four thousand in an act that symbolized the inclusion of Gentiles at God's communion table (18). Jesus was condemned by the religious leaders of his day for proclaiming and living this ministry to Gentiles (19, 20).

The early church, likewise, displays this remarkable inclusiveness. DeYoung et al. note that at Pentecost, "the church was multicultural and multilingual from the first moment of its existence" (2003:22). The conflict over distribution to the widows (Acts 6) in a multicultural church is resolved by the appointment of Hellenistic Jews in an inclusive leadership act. Pointing to a number of New Testament scholars, they argue that "the early congregations of the church of God were culturally diverse" (37). Antioch is given as a prime example in which, though Jews and Gentiles continued to affirm their own cultures, they freely mixed in house churches and practiced open table fellowship because their universal faith gave them an ability to break out of culturally exclusive practices. Since these "followers of the way" could not fit into any simple category of pagan or Jew, they were henceforth called Christians, and thus made up a social and not an ethnic group (27-29). DeYoung et al. conclude that the inclusive model of fellowship at Antioch spread to places like Corinth, Rome and Ephesus.

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is seen in the light of the conflict between Paul and Peter over table fellowship within the church, and the Council's decision was intended to maintain unity in Antioch and the church at large, empowering Paul to move ahead with his ministry of reconciliation. DeYoung et al. state that "The result was the founding of multicultural congregations wherever they went" (2003:36). Thus, they see the narrative of unity as running through the entire New Testament practice. In a critique of the church growth model, they note that the text in Ephesians 2 shows that both evangelism and reconciliation happen simultaneously, and that therefore a sense of oneness and equality must prevail in church life (2003:154, 155).

In interviews conducted during the research project in this dissertation, very few lay members articulated a developed theology of unity in Christ. Members seemed to understand the importance of unity, but they were unsure of what it meant (as we will see in the section that follows). It was obvious to most, whether white or black, that it was no longer politically or theologically appropriate to speak about separate spaces for different cultures. The sinful reality of apartheid (discovered through hindsight) has effectively silenced the public voice of the narrative of difference. In its place, there is a strong tendency to argue that we must all be united in Christ. However, the question still remains—just what does that mean? The argument that we must "all be together" may also ultimately mean the loss of recognition for our right to be different.

10.2.4 A Critique of the Narrative of Unity

This brings us to our next point, namely a critique of the narrative of unity. Firstly, we note that the narrative of unity is fairly ambiguous. In surveys conducted in the three congregations studied in this research project, a question was asked, "What is your understanding of church unity?" A careful analysis of the answers reveals a very diverse response. Members saw unity in at least fifteen different ways (although there was some overlap between them). Quotation marks indicate actual comments.

1. Unity of organization—"One conference based on geographical area, not on race."
2. Common worship service—"When one is free to visit or worship at church without feeling racist attitudes. How can we expect to be in heaven together when we cannot worship here on earth together?"
3. Unity of faith/beliefs—"The different cultures need the same theology, vision and goals and standards/beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." "Unity is unity of faith not necessarily unity in worship or church."
4. Unity of action—"Everyone working together regardless of race."

5. Relational unity—"Working together in love and caring for one another. Praying together and for one another."
6. Unity in decision—"When the church is able to decide on major decisions together."
7. Common humanity—"All men are created equal."
8. Unity in Christ—"Church unity means all cultures are united under Christ." "We are one in Jesus and that should be our focus, not politics."
9. Unity as understanding—"It helps understanding each other and different cultures." "Having specific programmes on race issues to discuss openly the differences so that we can reach an understanding on how to move forward."
10. Unity as acceptance—"Not judging each other but accepting each other."
11. Unity as love—"Should mean acceptance and 'unconditional love.'"
12. Unity as inclusion—"Inclusive participation of all races and cultures."
13. Unity as diversity—"Unity represents diversity or there would be no need for unity."
14. Unity as uniformity—"One culture."
15. Unity as service—"Having a range of activities, mostly social welfare service in which members participate for spiritual growth and personal bonding."

The narrative of unity, therefore, represents a somewhat ambiguous response to very practical dilemmas in the local congregation. Someone might argue that this simply shows the depth of the concept of unity. This may be true, but what does one do when diverse and even conflicting views of unity are held? For those who see unity as merely applying to a common set of beliefs, how would one convince them of the importance of worshipping together? Some see unity as open discussions of racial issues, but others see such discussions as breaking down the very unity they are supposed to build. Some see unity as allowing cultural space (so that cultures can coexist peaceably), and others see it as living only according to Christ's culture (although it is not clear how Christ's culture is to be defined).

The very ideology of the narrative of unity is often understood in different ways. An example of this is given by Emerson and Smith in their book *Divided by Faith*. They analysed white and black evangelicals and discovered that racial reconciliation was interpreted differently by members of each race. "White evangelicals not only interpret race issues by using accountable freewill individualism and relationism, but they often find structural explanations [used by black evangelicals] irrelevant or even wrongheaded" (2000:78). Thus, white evangelicals rely on personal friendships as the answer to problems of race, and blacks see the problem as also needing structural societal solutions. Both races desire unity but speak of it in different ways.

A number of authors point out that many churches call unity what is in fact assimilation and not integration (Peart 2000:135; Anderson 2004:92; DeYoung et al. 2003:165). Sometimes whites expect blacks to worship a certain way that they define as the "heavenly way," and sometimes blacks will argue for forced integration on black terms. This kind of "unity" is prescribed, mandated and ultimately works against itself. The only path to oneness under these circumstances is to adjust to the other person's expectations.

A sophisticated form of argument against the narrative of unity occurs in the political theories of Charles Taylor, who argues for "politics of recognition" in which all cultural traditions are given space, equality and dignity without an attempt to find overarching human principles to govern society (*Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* 1994).[93]

The practical implications of this narrative of unity remain difficult to define. The majority of responses to the question on what unity means, both on the surveys and in the interviews of this research project, were abstract and conceptual. The very breadth and depth of the narrative of unity means that church members have a hard time applying the concept in their local churches. The net result is that discussions on unity tend to be idealistic, while members continue to deal with the more concrete realities of everyday practice according to the narrative of difference. This is illustrated by comments such as, "I enjoy worshipping with people of other races, but I'm not sure if my children will stay in the church if I remain here." "We should be together, but I don't understand why whites don't attend the potluck dinners any more. I'm beginning to think that it's because they don't want to fellowship with blacks." "If whites don't vote for a unified Conference structure, then we must remove their churches from the unity of the Adventist faith." "This is a great multicultural church, but I don't think I can bring my friends here, they just wouldn't fit in."

All of these statements reflect the fact that, while we may espouse unity, unless the ideology of unity has a praxis that can deal with diversity, we will remain as stuck in the status quo (of the narrative of difference) as before. Again, Emerson and Smith give a useful example of this. An intentionally racially-mixed church (that they dub "First Church") was started with an equal number of whites and blacks and a black pastor. However, as the church grew, it attracted more blacks than whites. White numbers dwindled, and some members began expressing concerns that their spiritual needs were not being met. Whites began leaving one by one. Within three years, fewer than ten whites remained. Here we see the dilemma of a group ideologically committed to unity in joining a multiracial church, but ultimately succumbing to the praxis of difference (Emerson and Smith 2000:147-148).

[93] Jurgen Habermas argues for a more complicated critique of the narrative of unity as defined by "liberals" while not fully agreeing with Taylor's multiculturalism approach. He argues that we need open communication structures that recognize both individual and collective intersubjective space (2001:220ff).

10.2.5 Summary of Historical Narratives

While the two narratives that we have presented here are not the only narratives that exist, they appear to be the most persuasive. We have seen that the narrative of difference tends to operate out of pragmatic expectations of the church in society. It bolsters the status quo by reinforcing societal distinctions and barriers. It usually results in exclusion. Although extremely persuasive in the past, it has rapidly lost impetus with the demise of apartheid. However, its legacy still continues in separatist thinking and practice within local congregations where members find it difficult to worship and socialize with members of other races.

On the other hand, the narrative of unity appears to operate out of ideological idealism. It urges a divine reality that is transformative of the human situation. But, in general, the narrative of unity is both ambiguously interpreted and applied. Because this narrative does not have a praxis that deals with diversity, it often becomes impractical for those who try to live by it.

It is suggested that the answer to these two narratives lies not in removing one or the other, but in allowing both of them to exist in tension. This has often been expressed by the concept of "unity-in-diversity," or even more theologically correct, "Unity-in-diversity in Christ." However, here again the challenge arises that the terms remain ambiguous and even confusing when we seek to apply them in situations of theological praxis. Can I worship and socialize separately and still be "united in Christ?" At what point do differences become divisive?

We ask again the central question of this chapter: What is God's intention for a community in transition to heterogeneity? Our answer must simultaneously call for unity while dealing with practical realities of diversity.

Our concern is therefore to develop a narrative that speaks to the ethical and pragmatic challenges of a church in transition, while remaining true to a "unity-in-diversity in Christ" hermeneutic. Since there are historical and hermeneutical challenges with both the narrative of diversity and the narrative of unity, it seems that there is a demand for a new narrative. We need a narrative that expresses the tension between unity and diversity while dealing with the questions of praxis raised by communities in transition. The narrative that we will propose does not attempt to be all-embracing (and thus a return to foundationalism), but instead will hopefully serve as a fund for a community's practical theological imagination, inspiring new ways of being and interacting that are in harmony with God's intention.

10.3 THE NARRATIVE OF THE STRANGER

To answer our question about God's intention for a community in transition, we must return to the witness to God's revelation, the Scriptures. Only as we trace God's hand upon history in an inspired record do we have any hope of rescuing a narrative that is transformative of our practice today. Of course, this is not to say that we can isolate a narrative independent of our conceptions of it. It simply means that the perceived narrative will interact with our own narratives in a dialectical and constructive way.

As we look at God's relation to diversity and to the experience of otherness, one particular area of Scripture immediately captures our attention—the treatment of the stranger in Old and New Testament thought. We will discover that the narrative of the stranger is a particularly powerful narrative for a community in transition. In this narrative, we find themes, characters and motifs that reflect both our anxieties and our hopes as we encounter diversity. We also find practical and eschatological developments that give keys to unlocking the challenges facing congregations in multicultural societies. Shorter mentions in his work on Christ and cultures that:

> It is God who speaks through strangers, and this "conditioning by strangers" is an important theme in the history of divine revelation. In the history of Christian mission, the message has always been brought by strangers in the first place, and the chain of tradition goes back ultimately to the original "stranger" who is Jesus Christ (1988:15).

The "stranger" concept is one that naturally adapts itself to an intercultural situation. When persons of colour first begin attending a "white" church, their physical differences accentuate the reality of the cultural differences that exist between them and the majority white culture in the church. Both groups (due to these noticeable physical differences) immediately sense their "strangeness" to each other. This strangeness can move from honeymoon sweetness to "cultural shock" and even hostility (as demonstrated in Chapter Nine). Working through "being a stranger" and "welcoming a stranger" seems to parallel the experience of congregations undergoing cultural change.

According to some intercultural experts, an understanding of the concept of "strangers" is useful for dealing with intercultural relations. Shack states that "the concept of the stranger remains one of the most power sociological tools for analyzing social processes of individuals and groups confronting new social orders" (as quoted in *Communication with Strangers* by Gudykunst and Kim 1984:24).

While our concern in this section will be particularly with a theological narrative, it is nevertheless helpful that this narrative has resonance with the social pragmatics of church praxis.

10.3.1 The Call to Be a Pilgrim Stranger

One particular word describes the "stranger" in the Old Testament, the word *gĕr*. The word for *gĕr* is variously translated as "stranger," "alien," and "exile," but particularly refers to the "sojourner."[94] Buttrick's *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (IDB) defines *gĕr* as a "person living in mutually responsible association with a community not originally his own, or in a place not inherently his own" (volume 2, 1989:381). Thus the "stranger" occupies a place somewhere between a foreigner and a native-born person. He comes to dwell in a community that is not his own, and therefore "lacks the protection and benefits provided by kin and birthplace" (ibid. Volume 4, 1989:397).

This concept of the sojourner is found throughout the Old Testament, but, surprisingly, it is not limited to non-Israelites. It has a deeper application to the people of Israel as God's covenant people. "The basic meaning of גר 'sojourner' is employed to express Israel's relation to God's favor. Israel lives by God's invitation, 'Come and live over at my place,' and by doing the will of the divine host: 'This land is mine; for you are strangers [גרים] and sojourners [וחושבים] with me' (Leviticus 25:23)" (IBD volume 4:399).

We are therefore called to be pilgrim strangers. Parker Palmer, in his book, *The Company of Strangers*, highlights this concept when he writes:

> The stranger is…a central figure in biblical stories of faith, and for good reason. The religious quest, the spiritual pilgrimage is always taking us into new lands where we are strange to others and they are strange to us. Faith is a venture into the unknown, into the realms of mystery, away from the safe and comfortable and secure. When we remain in the security of familiar surroundings, we have no need of faith. The very idea of faith suggests a movement away from our earthly securities into the distant, the unsettling, the strange (1983:56-57).

This narrative of being a sojourner finds its role model in the life of Abraham. Abraham is called out in faith to become a pilgrim stranger. The Bible records God's command to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house" (Genesis 12:1). Only in departing can Abraham be a blessing. "To be a child of Abraham and Sarah and to respond to the call of their God is to make an exodus, to start a voyage, become a stranger" (Volf 1996:39). This narrative means the departing from a commitment to our particular culture and connecting ourselves with a universal God. "At the very core of the Christian identity lies an all-encompassing change of loyalty from a given culture with its gods to the God of all cultures" (ibid. 40). The importance of this departure is that without it there would be no new beginning. Abraham and Sarah must remove themselves from their ancestral relations if they are to begin a new history.

[94] This is seen, for instance, when the noun and verb form appear together in passages such as "the stranger who sojourns among you" (Exodus 12:49).

Through this story one begins to see the power of the narrative of the stranger for local Christian congregations. Only as we "depart" from our cultures and commitments can we be truly enabled to enter into God's community, and thus to return to our earthly commitments with new eyes. Churches can find in this narrative a way to transcend narratives of difference and unity. We are called out of our cultural commitments to a universal commitment, but this universal commitment also calls us back into our culture, family and communities.

Abraham's narrative shows us both the individuality and communality of the call. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer views Abraham's call as something that he must do individually.

> The breach with all our immediate relationships is inescapable…. [Abraham] had to leave his friends and his father's house because Christ came between him and his own. On this occasion the breach was evident. Abraham became a stranger and a sojourner in order to gain the promised land. This was the first call. Later on he was called by God to offer his own son Isaac as a sacrifice…. Abraham becomes an individual, a lonely and solitary figure (1995:98-99).

However, Abraham is not left in this solitary position. As Bonhoeffer states, "the same Mediator who makes us individuals is also the founder of a new fellowship" (ibid. 100). Abraham is given back his family and returns to live in the world as he has done before. From now on, the community is based not on mutual allegiance to each other, but on mutual allegiance to God. However, Isaac's sacrifice, as an example of Christ's sacrifice, has a profound effect, for Abraham must mediate all that he has through this one great commitment. Community is mediated through one man.[95]

As Abraham embraces the call to pilgrimage, he accepts that all his possessions and relationships remain subordinate to God. Faith therefore remains "at odds with place" (Sennett 1993:6, as quoted by Volf 1996:40). Our cultures can never take priority over our faith. Abraham's departure is also not simply a random departure, however, but a call to a "land" that God will give to him. The narrative of pilgrimage is therefore not an aimless meandering, but a purposeful, faithful obedience with a definite *telos*.

What we have seen so far in the story of Abraham is the call to a departing—a call to journey into otherness. And yet, in this "solitary" otherness, Abraham finds true community, no longer based on ancestral relation, but based on a common faithful relationship with the God beyond culture. Rather than simply settling, Abraham becomes a nomad whose final "city" of destination is not built by man, but by God (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham becomes a sojourner, representing the true nature of faith. True faith as

[95] Parker Palmer in his commentary on the ideology of intimacy states that "we come close to each other not directly but through God's mediation in our lives…. The irony of the quest of intimacy is that it drives us apart. We try to cling to each other and in clinging we distort the other person and ourselves… But if we approach each other through the God who is found at the deep center of our true selves, then we can come together not in distortion but in truth, not in self-interest but in compassion. When we allow God's love to mediate our relations, we place between us holy space, a space in which we can respect and be respected for who we are" (1985:109, 110).

illustrated by Abraham must lead us sever our dependence on our natural associations and step out in faithful obedience to the One calling us. Abraham typifies the Bible's portrayal of faith as a journey. Hauerwas and Willimon state in their book, *Resident Aliens*, that "The Bible is fundamentally a story of a people's journey with God" (1989:53).

To experience life as a sojourner "in a strange land" is therefore to become dependent on God and to experience his promise in the midst of our journey into otherness. The writer of Hebrews indicates that the great men and women of faith were "strangers and pilgrims" (Hebrews 11:13), for their embrace of the promises separated them from the world. Therefore, as those who live by faith, we too are strangers in this world.

In 2 Peter a similar sentiment is expressed. God has a new people, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," who have been called out by God. This new group is now "the people of God," and yet surprisingly they remain "strangers and pilgrims" (2 Peter 2:9-11), for they are at war with the world and its fleshly lusts. Peter uses the metaphor of the stranger to describe how the church remains in the world while its members are citizens of another world.

The importance of this narrative for the local church is clear. We are not to be dependent on our culture, place or possessions. The call to be a stranger is the call to otherness, to stepping out in faith, to a trusting in divine promises. We are enabled to enter God's world (which is foolishness to our worlds) and to live as citizens of another kingdom. However, this call to heavenly citizenship does not take us out of our existing worlds, but instead places us back in our existing communities as "resident aliens." We can therefore work within and minister to our cultures without being bound by them.

Churches where everything happens in a strictly ordered fashion and where one culture predominates (even though many ethnic groups may be present) need to reconsider their worship style in the light of the narrative of the stranger. It is precisely in moving out of our "comfort zones" that we begin to experience the gospel and faith. Relativising our commitment to one culture frees us up to experience ultimate commitment to the God of all cultures.

10.3.2 Welcoming and Caring for the Stranger (Abraham and Old Testament Narratives)

The story of Abraham, however, is not simply a story about *being* a stranger, but also a story about *welcoming* strangers (see section 10.4). In Abraham's narrative, we see the profound implications of welcoming the stranger. There is the story of the King of Salem, Melchizedek, who brings bread and wine to Abraham, and to whom Abraham in turn gives a tithe of his bounty (Genesis 14:18-20). This powerful analogy of grace and reciprocation turns messianic (Psalm 110:4) and distinctly Christocentric

in later history (Hebrews 5:6-11; 6:20-7:28). Christ is therefore embodied in the stranger outside of Abraham's family.

This portrayal of the divine stranger is seen again a few chapters later. Genesis 18 begins by stating that "the Lord appeared to Abraham…" (18:1). It then describes three strangers passing by Abraham's tent. Abraham immediately runs out to greet them and to offer them his hospitality, calling himself their servant. He has their feet washed, bakes them bread, kills the fatted calf and provides a full meal for them. Suddenly the narrative reverts to the divinity present in these strangers, "And the LORD said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year and your wife will have a son" (18:10). Here we have the surprising picture of God "disguised" in the form of three strangers who are ready to "pass by." Before the provider can give a blessing, Abraham must first provide for Him (see Rhodes 1998:134). Blessing arises out of hospitality—the stranger is revealed to be God. John Koenig comments that strangers, from this perspective, "enlarge our total well-being rather than diminish it" (2001:5). Divinity is veiled within the stranger. Welcoming the stranger is a welcoming of God Himself. When we welcome Him once, He is likely to return.

Welcoming the stranger was part of culture of the time. Later in biblical history, specific laws dictated how the children of Israel were to relate to the "stranger" (or *gĕr)*. "And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:33, 34 NKJV). This powerful law regarding the stranger ensured justice, protection, love and hospitality. It went far beyond "basic human rights," building from a commonness that lay beyond their difference. Israel could treat the stranger with compassion because of their common reference point in both being sojourners. The Israelites' experience of oppression taught them to value the stranger. "You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9 NASB).

Since the stranger is not in "his own territory," he is dependent on the protection and support of others. For this reason, strangers are often characterized together with the orphans, the widows and the poor. All these groups had minimal rights in society and appeared to be the particular concern of divine justice in the Hebrew economy. "For the Lord your God…is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:17-19 RSV; cf. Exodus 22:21-24; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 24:14-22).

Israelites—the people of God—were therefore called to live as strangers, but also to embrace and care for strangers. By both living as "the other" and embracing the "other," Israel was to find God.

Numerous Old Testament examples can be given. The story of Ruth and Naomi is a prominent one, showing two strangers whose different journeys collided in a common bond of faith, loyalty and love. Naomi was forced by famine to journey into a foreign land and to become a sojourner. There she experienced the death of her husband and two sons. Her daughter-in-law Ruth united herself to her foreign mother-in-law and determined to journey with her back to Bethlehem. Ruth took up the pilgrimage of being a stranger and declared, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16 NASB).

Ruth's response arose out of the image of God that she had seen portrayed in her mother-in-law, for she covenanted herself not just to Naomi, but also to Naomi's God. Rhodes comments: "By embracing the stranger we begin to see the presence of God who is wholly other in new and empowering ways" (1998:124). Thus, two strangers embrace in a covenant of pilgrimage. They have seen God in the other, and from now on, their journeys will be from this shared vantage point. The narrative of being a stranger is therefore the narrative of being on a journey to otherness. Ruth, the stranger, will go on to be foremother of kings and the Messiah himself.

The Old Testament narrative records story after story of strangers who ultimately impacted on Israel's national identity and on their conception of God. There is the story of Rahab—a foreigner and a prostitute who welcomed two strangers and was herself welcomed (even though a stranger) into Israel's family, finally becoming an example of faith (Joshua 6; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). There is the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) that Christ points out (Luke 4:26) was the stranger outside of the nation to whom Elijah was sent (to both bless and be blessed). The hero of the story of Jonah is not the Israelite prophet, but the God who refused to shut out the "strangers" when they accepted the message of judgement as an invitation to mercy. The story powerfully contrasts the hospitality of the heathenish foreigners with the Jewish prophet who was more concerned about his reputation than the well-being of the other.

The command to love the stranger arises out of God's own concern for strangers and out of the parallel experience of the Israelites. Instead of being alienated and rejected, the stranger was to be nurtured and protected, and even loved by the people of Israel. However, this acceptance of the stranger did not imply that there were no restrictions. Rather, "the covenant between God and Israel depends upon the

participation of all members of the community in its requirements and benefits…and the sojourner must conform as far as possible to the covenant regulations" (IDB volume 4 1991:398).

In this respect, several times it is mentioned that there is one law for both the native-born and the stranger (Numbers 15:15-16; cf. 9:14; Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 17:14; 24:15, 22), and that the stranger can expect the same rights (Numbers 35:15; Ezekiel 47:21-23). He must, however, maintain the same fidelity to Yahweh (Leviticus 20:2; Ezekiel 14:7).

What are the implications of the law of *gĕr* for the contemporary Christian congregation? The scriptural witness clearly enjoins love for those we see as different from ourselves. This is in contrast to our natural tendency, which tends to sharpen the social boundaries and exclude those who we perceive as alien to us. The law of *gĕr* breaks down our ethnocentric preoccupation and causes us to refocus on the needs and mutual rights of others. Our compassion for them is based on our common human need for protection, love, and acceptance. We reach out to others because God reached out to us when we were yet strangers. And yet, strangers are still expected to abide by "covenantal" standards and to be obedient and faithful to Yahweh.[96]

10.3.3 Jesus and Strangers (Gospel Narratives)

In the New Testament we sense the same powerful, if at times implicit, narrative of the stranger. We see that strangers are not to be feared, but welcomed. We see that God is the Stranger who has come near and that by this act we ourselves become strangers and yet have finally "come home." The narrative of the stranger is the narrative of the Christian journey.

Jesus is born a Stranger, His parents were sojourning pilgrims unable to find a place to even spend the night. In a dim and musty stable, strangers from the fields and strangers from the East found God in the unlikely face of a newborn child. Jesus' childhood is spent in a "strange land" as he finds refuge in Egypt. He grows up in Galilee amid not only Jews but Gentiles (see DeYoung 2003:15). Even in Jesus' ministry, He remains a stranger, for Jesus does not develop a ministry in a local synagogue, but instead becomes a pilgrim with a group of itinerant disciples. They become a gathering of strangers, dependent on the hospitality of others. The disciples are sent without provisions and told to search for worthy persons who will welcome them and provide for them (Matthew 10:11).

[96] Jurgen Habermas brings these concepts together in his recent essays in *The Inclusion of the Other* (2001). He argues that it is possible for a single nation-state to exist that allows for plurality but that advocates mutually binding moral codes. In his view, laws exist not only to protect individuals but also to allow participatory rights. It is ultimately in "deliberative politics" (as opposed to a "politics of difference") that democracy is maintained that allows pluralism without destroying society.

Jesus' ministry can be described as that of the Divine Stranger. But instead of being accepted and shown hospitality, he is often rejected, despised and cruelly oppressed (Isaiah 53). "He came unto his own and his own received him not" (John 1:11). He is a stranger even to his own family, and He reaches out to strangers and calls them His mother, His brother and His sister (Matthew 12:50).

The most striking story of relating to the stranger occurs in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25). In this eschatological judgement, two groups are shown. Both groups have been waiting to welcome the King, and neither has seen Him. However, one group has occupied their time by welcoming, feeding, visiting and sharing with strangers. To this group, Jesus gives His commendation, "I was a stranger and you took me in." He shows that His divine presence is hidden in the stranger, the other, to whom we are called to share our blessings. "In so much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). To welcome the stranger is to welcome Christ Himself, and not to welcome the stranger is to stand under the judgement of Christ. Parker Palmer comments:

> "The stranger is not simply one who needs us. We need the stranger. We need the stranger if we are to know Christ and serve God, in truth and in love…. Certain crucial truths about our lives are more easily seen when we are on the edge at the margin, when we are poor or sick or hungry or in prison—and these truths can break the heart open to compassion. When we live on the edge, or take the position of those who do, we can more clearly see our world and what the Lord requires" (1985:65).

Jesus related to strangers on many occasions. In fact, all of His commendations of faith were directed to foreigners—the Roman centurion, the Syrophoenician woman, and the widow of Zarephath. One poignant example of Jesus and the stranger occurs in Luke's narrative of the ten lepers. Luke tells of ten lepers who came to be healed by Jesus. However, only one of the ten returned, fell at the feet of Jesus and gave Him thanks. Then in dramatic effect Luke declares the identity of the one thankful leper, "and he was a Samaritan." Jesus asked in amazement, "Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger" (Luke 17:16-18). The stranger recognized the depths of grace in his healing, for he knew he was undeserving. Once again, Jesus commended the stranger's faith (Luke 17:19).

The meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) is remarkable within its historical context, for Jesus showed kindness not just to a Samaritan, but to a despised and promiscuous woman rejected by even her own people. As she met this Stranger at the well who dared to cross the ethnic barriers between them, she suddenly realized that this Stranger was the promised Messiah. Jesus crossed risky social barriers to deliberately bring the gospel to this Samaritan village. His welcome became part of her healing within her own culture.

The powerful way in which Jesus became the divine Stranger and related to strangers teaches us that the narrative of the stranger is foundational to God's own story. We will discuss this concept more fully in section 10.4.

10.3.4 The Early Church and Strangers (Acts' Story)

In the early Christian church, we see the narrative even more forcefully demonstrated. First we see the explosion of Pentecost, when what had appeared to be a largely Galilean story was suddenly heard in a multitude of dialects and languages. Strangers were brought into a mutual and divine moment of revelation. The appointment of Stephen as a deacon, his speech and his consequent death extended the gospel to the Hellenistic Jews. In Stephen's speech (Acts 7) he engaged in a rereading of Israel's history according to the category of the stranger.[97]

In Acts 8, Philip met an Ethiopian state official along the side of the road, and a stranger from Africa was welcomed into the church by baptism. In Acts 10, the narrative turns to Peter and Cornelius, both strangers to each other. They were divided by the strong cultural and religious barriers that separated their two ethnic groups. To Cornelius, Peter represented nothing but a coarse, low-class fisherman from an uncivilized area of the Roman Empire. To Peter, Cornelius was the symbol of Roman tyranny, Gentile uncleanness and the ultimate example of a person outside the covenant of God. Yet these two men, on opposite sides of the social continuum, both received a revelation of God in which they were told to find and welcome the stranger. In their obedience to this revelation, they encountered God in the other. In a remarkable movement of the Spirit, Jews and Gentiles separated by tradition, law, culture, religion and social space were enabled to come together in common praise.

Paul's missionary journeys dominate the rest of Acts. Acts is a missionary story. It shows how the gospel began at Jerusalem and proceeded to Judea and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Its ever-widening influence was a growing inclusion of the stranger from Israel to Asia to Africa to Europe. At the heart of the book is the story of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15)—the struggle of the Jewish church to come to grips with a gospel that seemed to grow in culturally uncomfortable ways. The question they struggled with was how to maintain unity while still being inclusive of the stranger. Their minimum requirements showed sensitivity to Jewish cultural and moral purity codes while radically declaring that one of the most

[97] See an explanation of this speech in *Reaching the World Next Door* by Thom and Marcia Hopler (1993:73ff). They call Stephen's speech a "Hellenistic interpretation of Jewish history" (1993:75). Stephen showed how the true Israelites were not located in Palestine but in Egypt and Mesopotamia. He argued that Abraham was born in Mesopotamia and did not have any land of his own in the Promised Land. Joseph was given honour, not in Palestine where he was rejected by his brothers, but in Egypt, which also became the burial place for the Jewish forefathers. Moses, the great prophet, was brought up in Egypt and given the law at Sinai, and although rejected by the Israelites because he was too Egyptian, was accepted by God. Even though the temple was in Jerusalem, God was not only worshipped in one place, but everywhere. Finally, however, Stephen threw all caution to the wind and told them that the Jews had rejected the Stranger among them (as their forefathers had), but that this Stranger had been the Righteous One who now stood at the right hand of God.

important Jewish identifying cultural boundaries, circumcision, was no longer necessary as part of the new covenant. Strangers could be accepted into the church without becoming second-class citizens.

Throughout the New Testament we see a struggle concerning how to include the other in the life and community of the "new" Israel, now redefined by Christ's death and resurrection. We see this throughout the rest of the book of Acts. Beginning at Antioch and spreading like wildfire across the empire, Jews and Gentiles were remarkably brought together in a bond that overcame their strangeness to each other. However, this inclusion of the stranger in the Christian faith was not without difficulty, and one senses a constant background tension in the relations between Jews and Gentiles.

10.3.5 Beyond Strangers (Paul's New Community)

Paul's view of the stranger is dramatically portrayed in the book of Ephesians. He examines the Gentiles as aliens to Israel and "strangers" to the covenant of promise (the promise to Abraham), but then discloses the solution. Christ has through His body and blood purchased our peace and made "one new man" out of both Jews and Gentiles. And now by a common Spirit, both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father. Henceforth the Gentiles are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). That Gentiles are included in the body of Christ (Ephesians 3) is identified by Paul as one of the mysteries of the ages. The move from being "strangers" to fellow members of "the household of God" is then consolidated by a passionate section on unity in which there is "one body" and "one Lord" (Ephesians 4). However, he notes that this unity can only be kept through love and forgiveness.

Paul thus uses the metaphor of the stranger and the citizen to describe the relation of Gentiles and Jews. He does this by stating that Christ has created a "new humanity" that relativises the importance of their previous ethnic distinctions. The phrase "the household of God" is given attention by Cain Hope Felder, who states that "Because of Christ's blood, all believers are supposed to be transported into a new Household of reconciliation and solidarity" (*Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class and Family* 1989:163).[98]

.In Colossians, Paul identifies this new humanity in Christ as one which we should "put on," and in which we should walk (Chapters Two and Three). In this new humanity there is no distinction based on ethnic origin, religion, culture or class, for Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:11). Our new humanity in Christ militates against any attempt at division. There can be no stranger, for Christ has created a new citizenship and humanity.

[98] See Section 10.5.1 for more information on how Paul related on identity and otherness.

The metaphor of the stranger is particularly applied by Paul to the Gentiles. However, based on Christ's death, he sees a resolution to the problem of the stranger. On the cross, Christ welcomed both Jews and Gentiles into a new humanity that transcended their differences. Thus, both Jews and Gentiles now belong to a common household where they are no longer strangers, but family. However, as members of the same family, they now must show love and concern that binds them together as family and maintains their unity without forcing anyone to sacrifice their distinctiveness (1 Corinthians 12-13).

10.3.6 Conclusions on the Narrative of the Stranger

Our journey through the narrative of the stranger in Scripture has indicated several important points. Firstly, we are called to be pilgrim strangers. Faith, we discovered, is a journey into otherness and a departing from cultural and familial commitments. This is what develops our trust in God's promises. We return to our cultures and communities in the light of a greater universal commitment to depart, recognizing that we are "resident aliens."

We also saw that in the Old Testament, the law of *ger* implied a caring for and protection of the stranger based on our common human need for acceptance and love. These strangers were expected, however, to live in the same covenantal relationship with God as anyone else. In the New Testament we saw how the theme of the stranger was connected with Jesus' own story. We also saw how Jesus brought value, commendation and welcome to the stranger, and we learnt that in welcoming strangers we welcome Christ Himself. In the book of Acts we discovered the progressive inclusion of the stranger and the remarkable unity of Jews and Gentiles.

In Paul's theology, we were also able to see beyond being forever defined as "strangers." Paul saw that the walls of hostility and divisiveness had ended in the cross, and a new oneness of humanity in Christ had been created. Therefore we are "no longer strangers"—we belong to a common household of faith.

The importance of this narrative for the congregation in transition to heterogeneity is that it defines the congregation, not by the culture of its constituents, but by their common commitment to a universal faith. Doing this does not take away from the diversity and otherness present in the congregation, but relativises those differences, calling on the church to care for "strangers" precisely because it knows what it means to live in the concept of "otherness."

10.4 THE PRACTICE OF HOSPITALITY: EMBRACING THE STRANGER

Since the narrative of the stranger is so broad, we will now look at one specific aspect of the narrative that is concerned directly with praxis. How are we to relate to strangers? This question will enable us to

discover the answer to a related question: What is God's intention for communities that are encountering diversity and otherness?

10.4.1 The Importance of Hospitality

One word in the Bible describes how we are to relate to strangers: hospitality.[99] The power and significance of this practice is clearly seen in Scripture. In the Old Testament, numerous examples are given of hosts graciously extending their provisions, their place and their welcome to needy strangers (see previous section on strangers for examples). The nation of Israel, as we have seen, was a nation of aliens dependent on God's hospitality.

In the New Testament, Jesus was both the Guest of others and their gracious Host. Through both His words and actions, He welcomed others to the messianic banquet. He urged His followers to open their table fellowship to more than just family and friends, and to include the outcasts (Luke 14:12). Jesus promised that in the act of welcoming the stranger we would welcome Christ Himself (Matthew 25:35).

This theme is picked up by other New Testament writers who show that we are to welcome others as God has welcomed us (Romans 15:7). We are to pursue hospitality as a Christian virtue, and this is such a strong ethic that it is also considered necessary for Christian leadership (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Hospitality is to be given liberally, "without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9) in the Christian community, and the writer of Hebrews reminds us that by practicing hospitality we may even entertain angels (Hebrews 13:2). Some theologians see all the parables and images of the Kingdom of God as having one recurring theme of welcome. Krister Stendahl, a New Testament theologian, comments that "wherever, whenever, however the kingdom manifests itself, it is welcome" (as quoted in Pohl 1999:8).

In recent years, a renewed emphasis on the practice of hospitality has arisen in theological circles. Some of the major works include Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (1975), Thomas Olgetree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (1985), Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (1985), John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (1985, 2001), and Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (1999).[100]

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[99] Parker Palmer states, "In Christian tradition, there is one word above all others which suggests the quality we should seek in meeting with strangers. It is the word 'hospitality'" (1985:67).

[100] A number of other works dealing with the broader issues of the stranger and hospitality in the church include the following: Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (1981), Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (1986), Thomas Hawkins, *Sharing the Search: A Theology of Christian Hospitality* (1987), Patrick Kiefert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worshipping and Evangelism* (1992), Francis Nichols ed., *Christianity and the Stranger: Historical Essays* (1995), and Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (1984).

Each of these authors suggests that we need to recover a critical understanding of the practice of hospitality in our churches in order to more fully represent the kingdom of God. Although many of them deal with how we are to treat the poor, the disabled and other needy groups, the questions and narratives that they raise nevertheless apply to showing hospitality to other races and cultures. But what does hospitality mean? In many cases, hospitality has been reduced to an image of "tea parties, bland conversation, and a general atmosphere of cosiness" (Nouwen 1975:66). The richness of the biblical and Christian narrative of hospitality has vanished amidst our contemporary reduction of its concepts.

10.4.2 The Meaning and Value of Hospitality

Pohl points out that hospitality as a fundamental human practice has always included family, friends and influential contacts. The uniqueness of Christian hospitality is that it has placed an "emphasis on including the poor and the neediest, the ones who could not return the favour" (1996:6). Rather than diminishing the value of hospitality to friends and family, Christian hospitality broadens this concept, so that the close relations in the family circle can be extended to needy strangers.

Hospitality occurs, according to Henri Nouwen, when we see the promise of relationship in our guests. After all, every stranger is simply a friend we do not know yet. The risk of interacting with a stranger is done in the promise of the hopeful and nurturing relationship that can result. Hospitality, therefore, involves "the creation of a free and friendly space" where we can discover the possibilities of reciprocal mutuality (Nouwen 1975:45, 55). In a similar vein, Pohl comments:

> In hospitality, the stranger is welcomed into a safe, personal, and comfortable place, a place of respect and acceptance and friendship. Even if only briefly, the stranger is included in a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations…. [Yet] Strangers rarely bring only their needs; within the hospitality relationship, hosts often experience profound blessing (1999:13).

This is the power of the practice of hospitality over other ways of relating to difference. Consider, for instance, the ineffectiveness of other attitudes. We sometimes use the word "tolerate" to indicate how we should handle those who think differently from us. "I don't agree with you, but I can *tolerate* our differences." While Christians should have tolerance for difference, tolerance on its own tends to promote ethnocentrism and cultural pride. We disdain those things that we only tolerate. The word "celebrate" is not much better. "Let's celebrate diversity!" we cry, hoping that people will notice our affirmation of others. However, celebration is a poor response to inequity, injustice and oppression. We cannot celebrate someone else's diversity if that means leaving them to be poor, oppressed and excluded.

The practice of hospitality suggests that we see difference as something not to be tolerated or celebrated outside of ourselves, but as something to be brought into our own communities, networks and space.

Hospitality, by its very nature, is welcoming,[101] expanding its boundaries to include the other. Hospitality is also giving, sharing freely of its own resources for the sake of the other. And hospitality is receiving, for the experience of hospitality teaches us that the roles of guest and host tend to reverse themselves as the guest suddenly imparts a blessing, teaches a lesson or leaves a gift.[102] Thus hospitality provides a rich, reciprocal way for us to recognize, respect and welcome the other, while freely giving of our resources and receiving of the guest's blessings. Implicit within a practice of hospitality is also a theology of reconciliation, for it is the "enemy at the gate" as a stranger that is most in need of our welcome and our inclusiveness. In this sense we move from a hatred of strangers to a love for them. "Hospitality" richly describes this process, for the word for hospitality in the New Testament, *xenophilia,* means "love of the stranger," and is the exact opposite of *xenophobia.*

The narrative of the stranger and the practice of hospitality appears to be one of the most profound and persuasive narratives of the Scripture record. Using this perspective of embracing the stranger, we look over the record of human history and see it written into every aspect of our story. If we are to see hospitality as the mode of God's Being, we shall expect to see it at each point in which God reveals Himself to us.

10.4.3 Hospitality in Creation

First there is the creation act itself, where God determines to be God-with-us in creation in spite of the risks attendant to such a decision. In creation, God hospitably shares His existence and gifts His new creation, embracing them in a relationship with Himself (see Migliore 1991:85). God risks embracing the stranger in creation and invites this stranger into His image, His reign and His very being. God declares this creation "very good" as He delights in the beauty and difference of the stranger He has created.

This experience of delight and surprise in the other is modelled in the narrative of the separate creation of Adam and Eve. Adam must first sense his "aloneness" in the world in order to appreciate his need for the other. When Eve is introduced, her welcome is assured. Adam will be introduced to someone who is like him, yet different—someone who complements him in her delightful strangeness. It is this differentiation in relationship that partially constitutes the imago Dei (Moltmann 1993a:223).

[101] However, as Pohl points out, hospitality can become exclusion and reinforce social hierarchies as we show hospitality to only certain people and not to others—see her discussion on the use of hospitality in Medieval settings (1999:48ff).

[102] John Koenig shows that this reversal of roles is contained within the Greek language itself. The noun *xenos* simultaneously denotes a guest, a host or a stranger. However, the verb *xenizein* means "receive as a guest" but also "surprise." Hence, in meeting guests, we are often pleasantly surprised by the value and blessing they bring to us. Hence, the word for hospitality used in the New Testament, *philoxenia*, implies not a love for strangers, but a delight and attraction to the whole, mysterious guest-host relationship (2001:8).

The Sabbath is God's feast of hospitality for His new creation. He stretches out the banquet of the garden, the joy of the creatures and the gift of His own presence for the new creation. Creation comes together, in all its diversity, to feast in the goodness of God as He rests from creating to enjoy His creation.[103] For a brief time, all things created exist as they were intended—in perfect harmony amidst diversity. "They were both naked…and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25). Seeing each other without any covering, Adam and Eve could live in this vulnerability without shame or fear. Strangeness was overcome by deep and unhindered intimacy.

God's hospitality in creation does not subsume diversity into sameness, but places diversity in a context of mutuality and relationship. We find that our differences enhance our joy in the midst of a sense of our common humanity and destiny. The experience of becoming one in our earthly relationships is in turn a reflection of the oneness-in-plurality of God (Moltmann 1993a:223). The call of creation is a call to intimacy that transcends otherness. For the church in transition, this is profound. It is in discovery of the "other" that we find intimacy with God Himself.

10.4.4 Hospitality in Judgement (The Fall of Humanity, the Flood and Babel)

Even the radical departure in the Fall does not destroy God's hospitality toward us. He remains committed to be God-with-us, graciously pouring out His life and love for His rebellious creation. However, the Fall also teaches us that God's hospitality does not absolutise human culture. The attempt to be gods in our right, to exalt human wisdom and understanding (culture) without dependence upon God results in God's judgement. However, God's judgement on culture is mitigated by the promise that through human culture (Adam's Seed, Christ) will come the destruction of evil (the serpent). God will partner with humankind to bring about the reconciliation of "all things in Christ."

Even in the wickedness that follows the Fall, the hospitality of God does not abandon humanity to complete destruction, even though "The Lord saw that the wickedness of human beings was great…. and he repented" (Genesis 6:5-7). Jurgen Moltmann calls this a dissonance in God, an internal conflict over His resolve to create in the face of an entirely evil creation (2004:39-41). How can God tolerate this wholly alien evil—He must blot it out and cease from creating humans. Yet, the story does not end there, for "the annihilation of the humanity that had gone wrong and the rescue of the one human being belong together" (ibid. 40). Moltmann comments,

> Apparently in God's heart faithfulness to his resolve to create conquers his regret at having created these wicked and violent human beings….God suffers the world in its contradictions, and endures it

[103] Jurgen Moltmann sees the Sabbath as "the goal of the divine creating and its fulfillment…. The feast of creation is also the goal of God's history with the world, from the creation in the beginning to the creation of the end time" (1978:75ff; see also 1993a:276ff).

> in his long-suffering, instead of annihilating it. He takes on himself the dissonance between the world's creation and its corruption, so that in spite of corruption the world may live (2004:41).

Within this judgement, therefore, is shown God's hospitality. For like the story of Christ, out of the one righteous man in a world filled with violence, God saves the world. And out of this catastrophe comes a new beginning. God will endure this great travesty and eventually prevail. Yet such patience carries with it a "divine pain" as God suffers because of man's wickedness.

In *The Open Church,* Moltmann makes a play on words, "God suffers because of us, for he wants to suffer us" (1978:31). For Moltmann this is essential to understanding how God, and therefore we His followers, can embrace difference. We endure the pain of living for others in order to truly be with others. Even when culture comes under the judgement of God, God suffers it in order to embrace it. As God's history is told through the cross and through the reconciliation of the ages, we see that difference is suffered in order to be embraced (and therefore reconciled). This is the story of God's hospitality to the "other" and the "stranger."

For a church in transition, it is apparent that God's grace knows no bounds. It endures the violent and wicked world with patience and fortitude, loving it in spite of itself. Yet, it does not absolutise or relativise human culture. Indeed, human culture (without God) has come under God's judgement. It is not culture that we must respect, but the loving, gracious and compassionate God who risks Himself on behalf of creation. So the church, dangerous and risky as it might be, chooses to endure (in some way to be a part of) the pain and division of the world. It cannot simply turn its back on the falsehood of the world; it must give birth to a new humanity, while covenanting to love the world with the patience, pain and hope of God.

10.4.5 Hospitality in Christ

The incarnation is another prime example of God's hospitality. Laying aside his royal reputation and his regal rights, Christ "humbled himself" (Philippians 2:5-11). The power of God's hospitality was now made manifest in a new way, for Christ came "disguised." Paul stated that Christ, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). That is, hospitality to be effective is not always the lavish display of sacrifice, but the hidden humbling of walking in another's shoes. God shares of Himself precisely by being limited to the reference point of the other. He who is the Creator now becomes the Created. The King takes the position of a servant and lives in the servant's place, so that in turn He can offer the servant the palace. This is hospitality at its best.

Christ's life is lived in the mode of hospitality. He is a stranger dependent on the hospitality of others. Yet, when Jesus is the host, we find his hospitality transforming. Christ practices a table fellowship that reaches beyond established social boundaries and includes the untouchables (De Young et. al. 2003:15, 16). Moltmann draws on the comment that Jesus is the "friend of sinners and tax collectors" to show how Christ's hospitality was extended to the unlikeable (1978:54ff). Marcus Borg writes in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*:

> One of his [Jesus'] most characteristic activities was an open and inclusive table…..The inclusive vision incarnated in Jesus' table fellowship is reflected in the shape of the Jesus movement itself….It included women, untouchables, the poor, the maimed and marginalised, as well as some people of stature who found this vision attractive (as quoted in Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:104).

Albert Nolan writes of the impact this kind of table fellowship must have had on those Jesus associated with:

> It would be impossible to overestimate the impact these meals must have had upon the poor and the sinners. By accepting them as friends and equals Jesus had taken away their shame, humiliation and guilt. By showing them that they mattered to him as people he gave them a sense of dignity and released them from captivity. The physical contact which he must have had with them when reclining at the table and which he obviously never dreamed of disallowing must have made them feel clean and acceptable (*Just before Christianity*, p. 39 as quoted in DeYoung et al. 2003:17).

One of the most remarkable acts of Jesus is recorded in its entirety by Mark, who shows Jesus welcoming the stranger into the Israelite temple. After Jesus chased out the money changers who had taken up residence in the court of the Gentiles (the only place where Gentiles could worship), He asked, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'" (Mark 11:17) Jesus thereby opens Israel's worship to the stranger. Brian Blount states that as a result of this incident, "Jesus offered a counter kingdom proposal: he foresaw a time when every people of every nation would call God's Temple their house of prayer." He notes that "in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is a preacher of multicultural worship" (as quoted in DeYoung et al. 2003:20).

At the cross, the paradox of hospitality is highlighted. Christ becomes the ultimate stranger, estranged even from His own Father, in order that he might bring us as strangers into His family. And as we accept the gift of hospitality upon the cross (a curse to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles) in its very strange form, we in turn practice hospitality by welcoming him into our lives. And this, in turn, enables us to accept other strangers. God's hospitable love within Himself flows out to us, even as enemies, enabling us to extend that same hospitable love to others. "Greater love has no man than this," Jesus said, "but that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This basic definition of human hospitable love is extended in the divine agape moment of the cross to include not only friends but enemies. Moltmann, in the context of solidarity and love, writes:

> On the cross of Christ this love is there for others, for sinners—the recalcitrant—enemies. The reciprocal self-surrender to one another within the Trinity is manifested in Christ's self-surrender in a world which is in contradiction to God; and this self-giving draws all those who believe in him into the eternal life of divine love (from *The Spirit of Life*, p.137 as quoted in Volf 1996:23).[104]

Even after the cross, we see hospitality and the stranger revealed in His post-resurrection appearances. Particularly noticeable is when along the road to Emmaus, He comes as a Stranger to two disciples. It is only in the context of hospitality that He reveals himself. Around the fellowship of a meal, the Stranger/Guest suddenly becomes the Host, and shows Himself in His familiar act of breaking bread. For the two disciples, extending hospitality to the Stranger resulted in receiving the blessing of divine presence. Palmer notes on this text that "in receiving the stranger, we perform an act of faith that opens the covenant to us" (1985:59). By their very strangeness, strangers can introduce the strange truth of God's promise and help us to grasp it in a new way. Strangers awaken our faith as we move beyond our anxiety to trust in the new and unusual blessing that God has promised.

10.4.6 Hospitality in the Christian Church

The church in the New Testament becomes the agent of God's hospitality. At Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's hospitable gifting of Himself, through the Spirit, to the nations. In dramatic and almost troubling revelations, God breaks down cultural walls to establish one new body of believers, unhindered by ethnicity, race, class, status or gender.

John Koenig has seen hospitality as the way in which the church partners with God, stating that it is "the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the gospel" (2001:8, 9).[105] Through hospitality, the church is enabled to live out God's mission. "Hospitality becomes, for the Christian community, a way of being the sacrament of God's love in the world" (David Kirk, as quoted by Pohl 1999:34). Koenig sees hospitality in the New Testament as enlarging the covenantal conceptions in the Old Testament. He calls hospitality "partnership with strangers" in which committed relationships are established between the guests and the hosts, leading to "unexpected levels of mutual welcoming" (2001:8). Yet the very strangeness of our partners helps us to see them as mediators of God's promise and presence.

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[104] This is similar to Moltmann's view of "com-passion" which he identifies as God's pain in the midst of suffering. Moltmann states, "Anyone who 'has compassion' participates in the suffering of the other, takes another person's suffering on himself, suffers for others by entering into community with them and bearing their burdens. This suffering in solidarity, vicarious suffering which in its vicariousness saves, is the suffering of God" (1993b:179).

[105] Koenig points out that the word for "community" in the New Testament, *koinoinia*, indicates a partnership in three significant ways. First, there is a partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5) in terms of promising financial aid. Secondly, it can denote shared worship (Acts 2:42), as when the early church met together for teaching, fellowship and prayer. The text also states of this group that "all who believed were together and had all things in common" (*hapanta ta koina*; Acts 2:44). Thus, sharing indicated that this partnership also involved material goods. Lastly, the word can denote a partnership with God into which one enters, partakes and for which one labours (2001:8-10).

This explains why acts of hospitality are so frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and why acts of inhospitality are emphatically condemned. When Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles at Antioch (Galatians 2), it was not just his keeping of Jewish cultural boundaries that infuriated Paul; Paul's central concern was that this was against the gospel, which had welcomed Gentiles into Christ's body and thus common table fellowship in the church.

10.4.7 Hospitality in the Consummation

God's final hospitable act occurs in the consummation. Here the covenantal promise of "God with us" finds its ultimate fulfilment in the sharing of God with humanity forever. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). God graciously makes His home our home. Jesus told His disciples that the purpose of His leaving was to prepare a home for them: "In my Father's house are many mansions…And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2, 3). God's intention is to bring us into His home and make us part of His divine family.

The future of this world is depicted as a messianic home-coming banquet (Luke 14:16-24; Revelation 19:9) in which God Himself is the Host. The scene is depicted as a marriage supper in which the bride (God's people) is finally united to her waiting Lover. We notice that God's hospitality does not remove diversity, but embraces it, for all nations, families, peoples and languages stand before His throne to offer up harmonious praise (Revelation 7:9). These diverse "saints" are then to "reign with Christ," even though they were once strangers and at enmity with God. Thus, God's hospitality results in the reconciliation of the universe.

This brief overview has shown us that the practice of hospitality is central to the story of how God acts in human history. The power of this practice is rooted in God's own inclusion of the other. He chooses to suffer alienation in order to enable reconciliation. God's hospitality does not destroy diversity but embraces it. We conclude that showing hospitality to strangers is a fundamental Christian practice and one that can help churches in transition to work through the difficulties of relating to others on the basis of the divine ethic.

10.4.8 Hospitality and Embrace

The value of the practice of hospitality for race and ethnic relations has been seen by Miroslav Volf, who writes on ethnic divisions and reconciliation (particularly in the Balkan region) in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (1996). Volf views hospitality through the lens of reconciliation, and sees it as taking place within a "theology of embrace."

Volf argues that two narratives have occupied social history—a narrative of exclusion (inhospitality) and a narrative of embrace (hospitality).

The narrative of exclusion has functioned in at least three ways: by assimilation (become like us); by domination (we are superior); and by abandonment (we will ignore you), each of which is done by driving others out from both our social and symbolic worlds (Volf 1996:75). Volf shows that exclusion results from a discomfort with strangeness within ourselves (Kristeva 1990), or because of the disruption and blurring that strangers cause to our own identities (Douglas 1966; Bauman 1993). Exclusion commonly happens because we desire what others have (Volf 1996:78). Thus, selfish desire is at the heart of the narrative of exclusion.

In contrast to exclusion, Volf describes a drama of embrace which exemplifies God's intention in the world, for "God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other" (Volf 1996:100). The theology behind the embrace is located at the cross, for on the cross God, in Christ, embraced the world, including His enemies. He made space for us and invited us in, suffering the pain of the world in His forgiveness of it. There is no guarantee that our embrace will be welcomed and affirmed. We may be misunderstood, rejected and even violated. This is the risk of embrace, for embrace is grace, and "grace is gamble, always" (Smedes 1984:137). Yet, arising out of the self-donating love of Christ manifested at the cross, we risk embrace in a parallel movement to God's own embracing act.[106]

Thus hospitality is central to the mode of God's being, for God in Christ embraced the other, and we too are called to participate in this drama of embrace by engaging in reconciliation that brings the other into ourselves without causing us to lose our own identity.

What we have discovered about hospitality so far is both its generosity and its empowerment. We have seen that the practice of hospitality is rooted in God's own covenantal relationship with the created order. Hospitality enables us to embrace diversity without destroying our identity. Hospitality can be practised as "embrace" by bringing diversity into our "space" and by generously sharing of what we have. Such embracing will have a fundamental impact on local congregations as they engage in honouring, accepting, transcending and critiquing diversity.

[106] However, Parker Palmer notes that, "We find our deep unity with others, not by seeking to embrace them, but by letting God embrace us. For it is in God's love that we find that bond by letting go of our limited loves and receiving the love of the God who made us one" (1985:109).

10.4.9 Comparison with Other Narratives

In the first part of this chapter, we looked at how a narrative of difference has arisen, which resulted in exclusion and separateness. This narrative of difference prevailed because it reflected the realities of human society and practice. Theological support for the narrative of difference was found in God's apparent blessing of diversity. We also saw how the narrative of difference received sociological support from the fact that churches naturally appeared to grow along racial and cultural lines. We then noticed how this narrative has been critiqued by those who instead argue for a narrative of unity in Christ which should enable us to be reconciled to each other in a new humanity that transcends our differences.

The narrative of the stranger and the practice of hospitality seem to offer a more fruitful approach to the challenges of reconciliation and diversity. Firstly, seeing ourselves as strangers helps us to recognize the relativity of our cultural commitments. Secondly, seeing God in the stranger helps us to move beyond superficial perceptions of the inferiority of others, enabling us to give others true recognition and respect. Thirdly, recognizing that we are called to be a company of strangers who are actually "no longer strangers," but part of the household of God teaches us that it is important to move beyond our otherness to see our commonness. Finally, in our examination of the practice of hospitality we have seen that embracing the other is a risky and costly act mirroring God's own actions toward us. Practicing hospitality teaches us to love the other while enduring and suffering differences. Our hope is that we will one day achieve the rich harmony across our differences that God intended in His original hospitable act of creation.

10.5 OTHER THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We return to the question we raised at the beginning of this chapter: what is God's intention for a community in transition to heterogeneity? We suggested that the historical narratives which emphasized either difference or unity were inadequate for these congregations. In their place, we suggested a new narrative of showing hospitality to the stranger. In the next chapter, we will look at the practical implications of this narrative. However, before we conclude this theological response, we need to look at a number of significant theological issues raised by this narrative, as well as their relation to congregations in transition.

10.5.1 Identity and Otherness in Paul's Thought

Probably the most fundamental issue at stake in embracing the stranger is how to relate to questions of identity and otherness. By embracing the other, do we not then lose something of ourselves? When a white church accepts and embraces black members, are they thereby sealing their own destruction of identity within the congregation? When a black member comes into a white church, is he not sacrificing

his own culture in order to worship with people who do things "their way"? How can we be inclusive without losing our own identity or causing the other person to lose theirs?

> The homogenizing presumptions of Western liberalism have been challenged by a "politics of difference" which emphasizes the uniqueness of particular social identities, like ethnicity and aboriginality, and adopts "affirmative action" programmes which, by definition, are not universalisable (Brett 1996:4).

In Paul's writings we discover the somewhat-complicated answer to the question of inclusiveness and group cultural boundaries. Here Paul struggles with the scandal of particularity in his own Jewish heritage and the embrace of universality in Christ. In this next section we discuss how Paul's thought has been seen in recent years not to have revolved around individual salvation, but corporate inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christian faith. How could the Gentile, who was a stranger to the covenant, be included in the Jewish faith without destroying it? We will see how Paul argues that strangers can become fellow-citizens, and how this relates to the social boundary markers that determine Jewish identity. In particular, we will engage with John Barclay, whose insightful essay "Neither Jew Nor Greek: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul" (in Brett ed. 1996:197-214) looks at recent perspectives on Paul's relation to Judaism.

First, Barclay refers to Stendahl's challenge to the classical Western tradition of Pauline interpretation. This view has read Paul from the standpoint of the individual's troubled conscience and taken his doctrine of justification by faith to constitute the solution to the sinner's quest for a gracious God. However, Stendahl sees Paul as primarily concerned with the immediate social issue of the integration of Gentiles into the Messianic community. His concern was to "defend the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promise of God to Israel" (as quoted in Barclay 1996:199).

This new perspective was further highlighted and substantiated by E.P. Sander, whose *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), according to Barclay, changed the course of Pauline studies in English-speaking scholarship. The issue for Paul was not "justification by faith" as much as it was the concept that the believers' new location was "in Christ" and awaiting his imminent return ("participationist eschatology"). Thus, the deficiency of the Jews lay simply in their not being in Christ (Barclay 1996:200). In a later book (1983), Sanders argued that Paul's polemic against the law was due to Paul's exclusivist emphasis on salvation through Christ and on his need to not have Jewish laws imposed on Gentile converts.

Thus, both Stendahl and Sanders emphasize the social dimensions of Paul's theology, specifically his commitment to integrate Jews and Gentiles in the church. This is picked up by James D.G. Dunn (*Jesus, Paul and the Law* 1990), who identifies the "works of the law" against which Paul polemicizes as

particularly those "boundary markers" which identified Jews in Graeco-Roman society: circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance. Dunn considers that "the leading edge of Paul's theological thinking was the conviction that God's purpose embraced Gentile as well as Jew, not the question of how a guilty man might find a gracious God" (Dunn as quoted in Barclay 1996:202). He goes further to show that Paul was directly attacking those who were trying to put too much weight on the distinctiveness of the Jews from the Gentiles, particularly with regard to the special laws which formed the boundary markers between them and with regard to those who saw Israel as a "favoured nation" (202). Thus, Paul rejected "nationalistic presumption" and "ethnic restrictiveness."

Barclay's analysis of recent literature helps us to see that contemporary thought on Paul has highlighted the importance of Jewish-Gentile relations in his writings. While some of this literature may underemphasize the individual-salvific elements in Paul's reconciliation theology, it clearly brings a needed corrective to our vision of Paul's objectives. Paul was theologically convinced that in Christ Gentile strangers had been included in the covenant, but he also realized the profound practical implications this narrative would have on Jewish identity.

This dilemma is taken up by Daniel Boyarin in his *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (1994). Boyarin brings a Jewish and non-Christian perspective to Paul and attempts to read Paul's critique of Judaism sympathetically. Central to Boyarin's interpretation is his idea that Paul was "motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy" (as quoted by Barclay 1996:206).

Boyarin describes Paul's original predicament as being a tension between God's universality and the particularity of his own nation. In a fictitious narrative, he describes Saul's struggle:

> An enthusiastic first-century Greek-speaking Jew, one Saul of Tarsus, is walking down a road, with a very troubled mind. The Torah, in which he so firmly believes, claims to be the text of the One True God of all the world, who created heaven and earth and all humanity, and yet its primary content is the history of one particular People—almost one family—and the practices that it prescribes are many of them practices which mark off the particularly of that tribe, his tribe (p.39 as quoted in Volf 1996:43).

Paul eventually resolves this crisis by conversion. The scandal of particularity is removed by embracing Christ. Thus Galatians 3:28 points to Christ as the one that fulfils "the moral and religious necessity of humankind, namely to erase all distinction between ethnos and ethnos, sex and sex and become one in Christ's spiritual body" (p.85, quoted by Barclay 1996:207). According to Boyarin, what Paul does is allegorise Judaism and spiritualise Jewish particulars, thus transforming the rites and the very existence of "a particular tribe" into "an historical, abstract, and universal human 'truth'" (p.96, quoted by Barclay

1996:207). In doing this, Paul transforms Judaism into a world religion (pp. 230-231 quoted by Barclay 1996:207), but at the cost of eradicating Jewish difference and disqualifying its vital genealogical identity.

Paul's stance on the area of circumcision receives particular emphasis by Boyarin. Whereas Paul shows a tolerance and willingness for Jewish rites to be accommodated in the Christian faith, from a rabbinic perspective this is to be seen "as the eradication of the entire value system which insists that our cultural practice is our task and calling in the world and must not be abandoned or reduced to a matter of taste" (p. 32 quoted by Barclay 1996:208). In the end, Boyarin ultimately rejects Paul's multicultural transformation of the Jewish tradition, despite its attractive embrace of all humanity, seeing it as leading to a kind of imperialism (p. 236 quoted by Barclay 1996:208) where one culture masquerades as non-specific.[107] In response he propounds a "diasporized identity" in which Jewish ethnic loyalties are combined with cultural participation in their local environments and shorn of ethnic claims (ibid.).

Barclay then takes issue with Boyarin's interpretation of Paul allegorising the Jewish cultural rites and idealising them. Rather, "he was placing alongside the Jewish community another which was equally physical and embodied in social reality" (210). Thus, Paul seeks to "enable an alternative form of community which could bridge ethnic and cultural divisions by creating new patterns of common life" (210).

Paul, therefore, does not erase cultural specificities, but relativises them (211).[108] Jews and Gentiles are simultaneously affirmed as Jews and Gentiles and humbled in their cultural pretensions (211). What vantage point does Paul take, Barclay asks? He takes the gospel, "a cluster of social values, focused in love, which enables the creation of a new community in which variant cultural traditions can be practiced" (ibid.). He can be all things to all people because his ultimate commitment is not to the law (or lawlessness), but to Christ. Thus Christ is not the founder of a new culture, but commitment to Christ can simultaneously encompass various cultural particularities. Paul is interested in a new community of love centred in Christ.

Barclay, then, in dialogue with Boyarin, offers two critiques of this perspective. Firstly Paul's perspective may well undermine those cultures for whom "cultural traditions cannot be a matter of taste" but are "the very core of their identity" (212). The very relativity of cultural practices undermines the seriousness with which they are taken by their practitioners. Therefore, like Boyarin, he argues for a dialectic between common values and cultural difference and that "somewhere in this dialectic a synthesis

[107] Boyarin's ultimate critique of Paul is that his universalism has become a hermeneutic that when "even at its most liberal and benevolent has been a powerful force for coercive discourses of sameness, denying… the rights of Jews, women and others to maintain their difference" (p. 233 as quoted in Volf 1996:46).

must be found, one that will allow for stubborn hanging on to ethnic, cultural specificity, but in a context of deeply felt and enacted human solidarity" (212).

The second critique is that Paul's multicultural vision presupposes common commitment to Christ and that this Christological exclusivism refused to recognize Jews thus resulting in a "particularist claim to universalism" (205, 208). However, as Barclay points out, this is at least partially deconstructed by Paul in his pervasive appeal to the grace of God since the God who has consigned all to disobedience will ultimately have mercy on all (Romans 11:32). Even the church, exists not for its own sake, but to bear witness to the grace of God. "To this extent, even Pauline theology could be mobilized to serve a multiculturalism whose religious basis is the affirming and relativising grace of God" (213).

Volf also critiques Boyarin's view and sees that rather than subsuming difference, the crucified Messiah creates unity by giving of Himself—the one for the many (1996:47). Paul then shows how this results in one body, "For in the one Spirit we were baptized into one body [the body of Christ]—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). This body has many differentiated members, but an essential unity in Christ.[109] Volf sees Paul's solution to the tension between universality and particularity as ingenious:

> The logic is simple: the oneness of God requires God's universality; God's universality entails human equality; human equality implies equal access by all to the blessings of the one God; equal access is incompatible with an ascription of religious significance to genealogy; Christ the seed of Abraham, is both the fulfillment of the genealogical promise to Abraham and the end of genealogy as a privileged locus of access to God; faith in Christ replaces birth into a people. As a consequence, all peoples can have access to the one God of Abraham and Sarah on equal terms, none by right and all by grace (Volf 1996:45).

This raises the question as to whether God has created another "third" race beyond Jews and Gentiles. Justo L. González states that this would be paradoxical, for "in the midst of a world divided by racism, God has created still another race" (as quoted by Volf 1996:49). Volf argues that instead of creating a Christian culture or race which Christians can flee to outside of their culture, Paul instead relativises the value we place on ethnic differences. Thus, our differences are internal to our culture (Volf 1996:18f).

Pollard, an Adventist theologian, calls this "Christorelativism" in which our identity in Christ relativises our ethnic identities. He states that in the eschatological community, race and ethnicity are relocated to a secondary level of identity, that is, "temporary distinctions that are utterly non-salvific" (Pollard 2000:19). He shows this in Paul's use of the comparative participle *hos*, when he states, "To the Jews I became *as* a Jew" (1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul is no longer primarily a Jew, but a Christian. He has to become "as" a Jew to reach his fellow Jews (even though he is already a Jew).

[109] See an interesting discussion of this concept in Botma's dissertation which looks at the theological implications of the Jesus-Sache in terms of unity and plurality in South Africa (1996).

However, "race and ethnicity—those realities in a fallen world that have been used to marginalize, oppress, classify, denigrate, endow, or privilege—Paul in this passage instrumentalizes" (Pollard 2000:19). Paul can still work for his racial or ethnic group, but only as an ambassador from another kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20). Thus, while Paul is not Judeo-centric, he is deeply Judeo-sensitive (Pollard 2000:20).

Shorter shows that Christianity claims to revitalize culture, to enliven it from within. It does this because of the divine destiny of human cultures, for it stresses the common destiny of human cultures in God. Through it people of every culture are invited to collaborate in Christ and to enter into communion with one another through him. This communion will find its fulfilment in the final recapitulation of all things in Christ, when God will be all in all (1988: 27, 28).

This extended discussion on Paul's thought with regard to Jews and Gentiles enables us to understand how to embrace the stranger. Our embrace of the stranger is done not by denying our own identities but by relativising them.[110] In Christ there is "no longer Jew or Greek," for although such distinctions continue to exist (in human terms), they are no longer determinative for the Christian. Differences remain internal to our culture but transcended in Christ, who has destroyed the wall of hostility between us. This brings us to our next point of discussion. For to become part of the new community of Christ is to experience reconciliation symbolized by hospitality (*xenophilia*) to the stranger.

10.5.2 A Theology of Reconciliation

Showing hospitality to the stranger cannot be considered outside of the perspective of reconciliation. Many churches are assimilated and somewhat integrated, but not reconciled. In this section we argue that reconciliation is central to the development of multicultural churches as they learn to practice the art of hospitality.

The theological importance of reconciliation for race relations has been pointed out by a number of authors (e.g. Moltmann 1974; Schrieter 1992; Washington and Kehrein 1993; Shearer 1994; DeYoung 1997; Peart 2000; Kujawa-Holbrook 2002; Tutu 1999). To develop a thorough theology of reconciliation

[110] Parker Palmer argues that hospitality is important to helping the other person keep their identity. "Hospitality means letting the stranger remain a stranger while offering acceptance notheless. It means honouring the fact that strangers already have a relationship---rooted in our common humanity—without having to build one on intimate interpersonal knowledge, without happing to become friends. It means valuing the strangeness of the stranger—even letting the stranger speak a language you cannot speak or sin a song you cannot join with—resisting the temptation to reduce the relation to some lowest common denominator, since all language and all music is already human" (1985:68).

could take a lifetime (as Karl Barth so ably demonstrated). What we are concerned with in this section is how the theology of reconciliation affects a local congregation undergoing transition.

The word "reconciliation" is used in classical Greek to speak of healing of a quarrel, a process whereby a broken friendship is restored from enmity to wholeness (see DeYoung 1997:44). Paul uses this language in the spiritual dimension to imply the restoration of a personal relationship both with God and others (ibid.). The word is used by Paul only a few times (Romans 5:10-11; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 2:16; and Colossians 1:20, 22), but each time it describes the radical transformation of humanity's friendship with God and with each other.

In terms of ethnic relations, the most important text on reconciliation for racially diverse congregations occurs in Ephesians 2:13-18. In this text, the wall dividing the two groups is broken down by the blood and body of Christ, and in its place Christ stands as the one new humanity who in His one body has reconciled both groups to God, thus putting an end to their hostility. As a result, Gentiles are "no longer strangers," but are now fellow members of the household of God.

We notice several important points about this text. Firstly, God, who also stands as the Victim, initiates reconciliation.[111] God created friendship with the world when the world was at enmity with God (Romans 5:8). In the parable of the prodigal son, the Father is standing at the roadside waiting for his lost son. He runs out to meet him and embrace him without waiting for an explanation. Therefore the victim (the one oppressed or injured) can initiate reconciliation through forgiveness of the perpetrator. However, for reconciliation to be finally achieved, it must result in justice.[112]

This brings us to our second point, which is that reconciliation precedes unity. We cannot be fully united while our memories have not been healed.[113] Until the barriers are removed, hostility remains. We can begin the process of reconciliation, however, because Christ has already reconciled us to each other through His one body. Thus reconciliation is the opening of ourselves up to what God has already achieved in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17ff).

Thirdly, we notice the violence of the act of reconciliation. A cross, blood and a broken and bruised body are the means of reconciliation. This teaches us that "Reconciliation is costly!" (DeYoung 1997:50) Yet

[111] Schreiter builds his theology of reconciliation around this important point (1992).
[112] Volf comments on the open arms of the Father by stating, "No confession was necessary for the embrace to take place for the simple reason that the relationship did not rest on moral performance and therefore could not be destroyed by immoral acts. The son's return from a "distant country" and the father's refusal to let the son out of his heart sufficed" (1996:159). However, he notes that for the embrace to be complete, confession had to take place, but this followed only after acceptance (1996:160).
[113] A healing of memory is one of the points brought out by Miroslav Volf. In order for us to achieve reconciliation, he suggests as one of four stages involving: (a) the need for repentance, (b) forgiveness, (c) making space in oneself for the other, and (d) the healing of memory (1996:100ff).

the violence is also hopeful, for Christ was able to absorb the violence of oppression and injustice onto Himself, thereby creating a way for victims and oppressors to be united.

Our fourth point looks at the primary barrier that was destroyed—the "law of commandments and ordinances." These structural laws legitimized Jewish exclusiveness and gave the dividing wall a moral and theological significance (see Rosado 1990:84ff). In order for reconciliation to be achieved, that which structured and legitimized exclusion and hostility must be abolished. This Jesus did not only in His death, but also in His life (ibid.).

Finally, we notice the effect of the reconciliation. God creates a new humanity. Reconciliation results not just in the dismissal of hostilities (such as happens in a truce), but the actual restoration of a new and hopeful relationship founded in love (Migliore 1991:137). God's reconciling act therefore enables something new to come into existence—a universal body of Christ that transcends all differences. In this body, Gentiles are no longer strangers, but incorporated into a new humanity along with Jews (Stott 1984).

The implications of this theology of reconciliation for the Christian congregation are both hopeful and challenging. It lets us know that reconciliation between the different races can be started in spite of prior oppression and injustice. However, reconciliation must embrace both forgiveness and repentance in order for it to be fully achieved. It must also deal with both individual relationships and issues of structural injustice.

What does this mean for the church? De Gruchy refers to the church as the sign of the "New Humanity" in Christ. The church participates in and points to a reality where true reconciliation is achieved because of God's action in Christ at the cross (1984:80-81). Bonhoeffer comments:

> In Christ mankind is really drawn into communion with God, just as in Adam mankind fell…. Whereas the old mankind consists of countless isolated units of Adams which are conceived as a unified entity only though each individual, the new mankind is completely drawn together into the one single historical point, into Jesus Christ, and only in him is it comprehended as a whole; for in him as the foundation and body of the building of his church the work of God is accomplished and consummated (Bonhoeffer as quoted in de Grucy 1984:80).

One of the challenges in becoming part of the household of God is engaging in reconciliation. Jesus reminds us that before we can offer our gift of praise, we must first be "reconciled to thy brother" (Matthew 5:24). Since we have been given "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:20), we need to find ways to achieve reconciliation that acknowledges our personal and structural sins and leads to unity through forgiveness and repentance.

In the story of the prodigal son, two possible options become available for the community of faith. One is to see the sin and alienation of the prodigal brother, and to turn on our brother and treat him as a stranger. The other is to see the stranger as he always has been in our hearts—a long-lost member of the family. We race to forgive him even before the confession, embrace him in our arms and call for the fatted calf. Thus our two choices in reconciliation are to practice exclusion or embrace, hostility or hospitality.

In saying this, we cannot presume that the past is the past and that reconciliation has been achieved before hurts have been healed and trust has been won. Reconciliation is a process that takes time, commitment and dialogue to heal from the betrayal of the past. As Tutu comments:

> It is not enough to say let bygones be bygones. Indeed, just saying that ensures that it will never be. Reconciliation does not come easy. Believing it does will ensure that it will never be. We have to work and look the beast firmly in the eyes. Ultimately, you discover that without forgiveness there is no future" (from Interview by Colin Green 1998).

The doctrine of reconciliation, especially as it affects race relations, can be considered a critique of the narrative of the stranger and the practice of hospitality. For in welcoming a "stranger" we assume no prior relationship, and therefore require no reconciliation. However, when we see the stranger as one who may be under the barrier of hostility now, but is in fact our brother and a member of our family, we approach the stranger in a new light. Jesus redefined the stranger in the form of Himself and welcomed strangers as if they had indeed been lost, but now had been found. The doctrine of reconciliation therefore teaches us to see the stranger in the light of the act of reconciliation.

10.5.3 Christ and Culture (Missiological and Eschatological Perspectives)

In our discussion of the stranger, we have not dealt yet with the discussion of how Christ relates to culture. Are we to accept culture or reject it? (See Niebuhr 1951.) While the answer to this question would require a complete research project of its own, we nevertheless will consider this important question from both a missiological and eschatological perspective. How does the calling of the church relate to its task to take the gospel to all nations (and therefore cultures)? How does the church as the sign of God's kingdom (in especially its eschatological form) relate to the way we understand church and culture?

In his book *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (2000), Darrel Guder discusses the relationship of Christ and culture from a missiological perspective, concluding that any ecclesial model must relate to God's own missionary movement. Guder forms part of a North American new missiology that receives impetus from two foreigners, Newbigin and Bosch, and that pays particular attention to the missionary nature of the church under the *missio Dei*:

> The *missio Dei* has always been the gospel, good news about God's goodness revealed in God's Word through Israel's experience, leading up to its climax and culmination in Jesus Christ. Throughout the biblical witness, God acts, initiates, and sends. God's compassion leads to his salvific action in human history. The Father sends the Son. This exclusive focus upon God as the subject of his mission is essential to the gospel, for it makes clear that humans, in their lostness, find hope in what God has done for them, not in what they might imagine they can do for themselves. Now, however, on the cross and at Easter, the salvation of the world was accomplished. God's mission now broadens to embrace the whole world for which Christ died. The gospel of God's love fulfilled in Christ is now to be made known to everyone. Because of the evangel, the call to evangelise is now heard. God's mission continues as that call takes shape in the apostolic community, the church (2000:40).

This lays the theological foundation for his discussion of the role of the church. At Pentecost, the divine event occurred which "turned the people of God into a missionary people, opening their ranks to receive men and women of all nations, tongues, races, and classes; forming them into a new community; and empowering them to move out into all the world" (Guder 2000:50).

Guder states that it is clear that this early apostolic community was "a radically multicultural community that found its unity in Christ and in its common calling to witness. An essential aspect of the joyful message was the powerful love that breaks down human barriers and creates a community beyond ordinary imagination" (2000:69). Therefore culture did not prove a barrier, for the gospel message operated out of a love that could supersede human barriers.

This brings us into dialogue with the central question of this section: if God's missionary movement embraces all cultures, then how then should the gospel relate to a particular culture? We have to state first that no particular culture can claim that it is the normative vehicle for the gospel, for all cultures are confronted and challenged by the gospel. Both "the evangelist and the mission community will be confronted again and again by the gospel as it is translated, heard, and responded to, and will thus experience ongoing conversion while serving as witness" (69). The notion of cultural purity must be rejected (see also Yancey 2003:39; DeYoung et. al. 2003:138). In its place we must see culture as continually being challenged by the gospel. However, it is precisely in our witness that we experience ongoing conversion, for as we witness to others, culture enters into a transformative dialogue with the gospel.

This view of culture prevents what Guder outlines as a basic problem with how the church relates to culture—its tendency to engage in *reductionism*. This occurs in many ways out of a desire to "control God," to assert that our way of understanding the Christian faith is a final version of Christian truth and to enshrine one cultural articulation of the gospel as normative for all others (Guder 2000:100).

Predominantly, Guder sees this reductionism in the separation of God's mission from the benefits of the believer.[114] Both pietism and the social gospel fall into this trap, and it is only when the church comes to grips with the magnitude and scope of God's mission that they begin to be set free from their narrower frameworks. We are ultimately engaged in partnership with God, and our vocation is a response to the calling of God. The church thus needs be continually converted to the fullness of Christ and His mission (2000:144).

Pentecost leads us beyond our reductionistic tendencies. We see that the Holy Spirit does not create one new tongue, but instead makes translation into all tongues possible. "In the gracious economy of God, the joyful message was intended from the very outset to be infinitely translatable and multicultural; it is to be conveyed into every language and culture of the world." (Guder 2000:79). Thus cultural diversity is embraced by God, and the gospel remains the common element in the witness even though it is received and translated in different ways.

How then does the particularity of Jewish culture relate to the broad and diverse cultures to which it is called to witness? Guder's answer is illuminating, for he sees the answer in the particularity of Jesus who as "a man in the first-century Jewish culture of Palestine, can be translated into the particularity of every other culture and place" (Guder 2000:81). This is because the translation is an event and not simply an idea. The Word continues to become flesh as it is witnessed to. "Therefore, because the joyful news is about God's mission, God's loving intentions for all creation, it is fundamentally missionary in nature, universal in scope, and necessarily, translatable into the particular" (81). Culture is thus mediated and redeemed through mission.

By this engagement with its missional calling, the faith community will inevitably be confronted by the gospel. The problem is one of control, for "cultures try to bring the gospel under their control, attempting to fit the person and work of Christ into their patterns of accepted religious practice," necessitating that "the converting power of the gospel reviews human reductions of the gospel and challenges the Christian community to greater faithfulness and a more obedient response to God's love" (2000:85).

Indeed, this translatable gospel is fundamentally not controllable. "It unsettles us to discover that faithfulness to Christ in cultures different from ours, looks different from the patterns we have evolved" (2000:90).

This broad sweep of Guder's thought challenges us to re-examine the relation of the gospel to culture in new ways. We see that the embrace of the stranger is first of all the embrace of the radical Christ. What happens, then, to our culture when we embrace Christ? Our culture has to undergo conversion so that it

[114] This is a point which he deals with extensively in his earlier work, *Be My Witnesses* (1985).

operates on behalf of the *missio Dei*. Part of the missionary churches' charter is to embrace other strangers, not attempting to create one culture (and thereby reduce the gospel), but allowing the gospel to be translated and transforming in their own cultural contexts. In this way we embrace the stranger under the love and judgement of Christ.

Peter Berger looks at the relation of Christ and culture in his book, *The Heretical Imperative*. He suggests that there are three options confronting cultural and religious traditions in the situation of cultural pluralism and the loss of cultural meaning. There is the deductive option, which is the refusal to communicate and a reaffirmation of the old certainties in a new-traditional manner. Then there is the reductive option, which implies drift and an acceptance of cultural and religious impoverishment. Finally, there is the inductive option, which is also the only possible condition for cultural and religious survival. This option implies dialogue. "It takes conviction, cultural loyalty and religious faith as its starting points and seeks to strengthen and clarify these through the evidence it discovers in other traditions." The inductive option, according to Berger, operates through intercultural experience and structural change (1980:48).

Guder would add that the church must not only confront other cultures but Christ as he is discovered as part of that culture. Christ is incarnated in every culture and must be discovered as and welcomed as a stranger there. Evangelism must therefore become an "incarnational witness" that operates from within a culture and not just from outside it (2000:207).

Shorter, in a similar vein, argues for "inculturation" as a way to handle the challenge of serving God's mission among many cultures. He defines inculturation as "the on going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures and thus the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures" (1988:11). However, this brings us the problem of cultural pluralism for if every culture is relative how then are cultures to coexist without being in conflict?

> "Cultural pluralism is not a scandal to the Church, but it *is* a challenge. Becoming a truly multicultural Church is not a question of resolving cultural differences or ironing out diversities…. [but] it is a call to conversion and communion with God in Christ. It is an orientation to the future to the convergence that is destined to take place" (Shorter 1988:29).

It this orientation to the future convergence that we now turn our attention. For the embrace of the stranger is founded not only on the mission of God, but also on another important concept which is found, particularly, throughout the New Testament. It is the proclamation that the kingdom of God has come and is coming. As Christians pay attention to this proclamation, they realize that it must change the nature of their communities in a multicultural society.

It is the hermeneutic of hope embraced by the coming Kingdom of God that provides a dimension for understanding how God relates to diversity. John de Gruchy examines this concept in his historical overview of race relations in South Africa, *The Kingdom of God in South Africa*.

De Gruchy suggests that the ultimate goal of the kingdom of God is *shalom*, a renewed creation and a fulfilled humanity. He argues that the kingdom finds its basis in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who, "relativized all human institutions, codes and programs so that the love of God for men and women could become the operative absolute in human and social life" (1979:214).

He calls the church which is faithful to the kingdom of God, an iconoclast, unmasking human pretence and will to power and defending the true humanity (1979:216). Thus, the church, in being caught up in the messianic sufferings of Jesus Christ, must come to repentance, being in the "service of the world under the sign of the cross" (1979:217).

Ideological structures are thus necessary to regulate our human life, yet also destructive and sinful. In relating to them, the Christian must seek their transformation, yet not simply retreat from them in anarchist tendencies (1979:223). The church should seek to be both the voice for the powerless as well as the redeemer of the powerful.

Commenting in a later work on Bonhoeffer, de Gruchy shows how the grace of God in Jesus Christ sets us free both individually and corporately for other people. He takes the concept of "liberation" in Bonhoeffer and applies it to the kingdom of God in South Africa. White people need to be liberated from clinging to those things that are contrary to the gospel—in this act of obedience, we are freed to listen to and claim the gospel (1984:72-73). Thus obedience leads to freedom and freedom exists for the sake of others. Bonhoeffer writes,

> In the language of the Bible freedom is not something man has for himself but something that he has for others… Being free means 'being free for the other,' because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free (as quoted in de Gruchy 1984:74).

The kingdom of God is thus a powerful critique of our current social and cultural ideologies. By raising an external critique, we are enabled to rewrite our histories and experience conversion to the *shalom* of God's kingdom, where peace and harmony reign in the new humanity to which we have been called. The theological and eschatological ideal of the "redeemed community" is expressed well by Michael Green:

> The Old Testament's hope of the redeemed community is one where God's shalom reigns. The element of personal forgiveness is there, but so is the mutual belonging, the restoration of relationships, the social transformation, the victory over forces of decay and destruction, and God's healing touch. In the New Testament the societal aspect of salvation is strongly stressed, as is its link

> with healing. To be sure, community and healing will never be complete in this life, any more than salvation will. Their climax lies beyond the grave. *But any evangelism that does not make clear God's will to rescue and transform the whole of life, physical and spiritual, and that does not make clear the mutual interdependence of those who are experiencing salvation is deficient* (Green as quoted in Peart 2000:108, italics supplied).

We see therefore in de Gruchy's call to the kingdom of God a call to *shalom*, that is, peaceful and harmonious relationships in the church. This should be more than just a future hope, but anticipated as a current reality. To be the church is to be in service to the world under the sign of the cross, becoming a voice for the oppressed and seeking the redemption of the oppressor. It is only as we exist for others that we find true freedom. In this way, the kingdom of God shows us the path to God's final intention—the reconciliation and peace of the entire Universe (Moltmann 1993c:334).

Understanding the reign of God critiques our narrative of the stranger in that it adds an eschatological perspective. We reach out to the stranger in terms of the final *shalom* where all strangers are reconciled in the final intended harmony of the universe. The kingdom of God both judges our cultures and calls us to a new community.

10.5.4 Conclusion

The complex questions of Christ and culture, unity and diversity and the nature of the church in a multicultural society have no easy answers. We recognize in this brief overview that the model of embracing the stranger must be fleshed out in light of Christ on the cross, the establishment of a new humanity and the reign of God's kingdom. As we struggle with "boundary markers" and deal with "politics of differences," we must nevertheless also see our foundational and powerful unity in Christ. In Christ, our differences are not done away with, but relativised. Our focus on Christ enables us to move beyond culture and to be reconciled to each other in a proleptic participation in God's *shalom*. Our common humanity and our common goal do not detract from our differences, but through our differences we learn to see ourselves and God more clearly.

10.6 CONCLUSION

In this analysis of narratives and their impact on the church in transition, we have looked at two historical narratives that have strongly influenced faith communities in South Africa. We have recognized that the narrative of difference and the narrative of unity, on their own, were insufficient to guide theological practice in these communities. In their place we have proposed a new narrative, the narrative of showing hospitality to the stranger. We have found that this narrative was rich in theological meaning and practices. We have seen how embracing the stranger was central to God's mode of interaction with His created order and how the call to embrace and care for otherness was indicated throughout the Scriptural witness.

The implications of embracing the stranger in terms of other theological models of identity and otherness, reconciliation, the *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God were also explored in order to deepen our understanding of how God relates to diversity.

In the next chapter we turn to the practical implications of this response for the local congregation, and seek to grapple with the very real challenges that congregations must face as they embrace the stranger in their midst.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *TOWARDS A MODEL FOR EMBRACING DIVERSITY*

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Churches in transition to heterogeneity are facing practical challenges and opportunities from both a sociological and theological perspective. Using our three congregations as a base, we have analysed both the sociological impact of transition and a theological response to cultural and diversity issues. In this chapter we will outline the practical implications of this study, allowing praxis and theory to mutually critique each other in an analogical and dialogical movement (although this will remain an ongoing project with these congregations after the completion of this research project). Using this critical correlational approach, we will propose a model that embodies the practice of hospitality for the local congregation in a multicultural society.

11.1 THE DRAMA OF EMBRACE

Showing hospitality to the stranger needs to have both a practical and symbolic dimension. A helpful way of demonstrating this is through figurative action. This is what Volf has done in presenting reconciliation as a "drama of embrace." He illustrates this figurative embrace with the literal embrace of two persons, and points out that any embrace involves four movements (or acts): opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms and opening them again (Volf 1996:141ff).

Act One: With "open arms" we create space in ourselves for the other, while also moving out of ourselves to enter the space created by the other. Open arms are a gesture of welcome and invitation.

Act Two: Then follows a period of waiting at the boundary of the other, as we watch for their arms to open. We cannot force an embrace, otherwise it is no longer an embrace, but violence. "If embrace takes place, it is always because the other has desired the self just as the self has desired the other" (Volf 1996:143).

Act Three: Then the arms close and the goal of the embrace is achieved—a reciprocal relationship. "In an embrace a host is a guest and a guest is a host" (ibid.). Volf cautions that at no stage in the process can the self deny either the other or itself.

Act Four: Finally, in order for the embrace not to cancel itself, it must let go. "The other must be let go so that her alterity—her genuine, dynamic identity—may be preserved; and the self must take back into itself so that its own identity, enriched by the traces that the presence of the other has left, may be preserved" (Volf 1996:144, 145).

The drama and theology of embrace that Volf offers is a powerful depiction of Christian reconciliation that maintains identity while embracing otherness. He writes out of a perspective born from the ethnic cleansing and crisis of the Balkan wars, and offers a hopeful portrayal of a reconciliation that transforms even as it forgives. As such, he effectively offers a theological and healing perspective on a sociological tragedy. Although dealing more with the intricacies of victims and perpetrators, there are nevertheless helpful insights for congregations undergoing transition to heterogeneity.

In this chapter, we will follow a similar structure to Volf's proposal. We will see the practice of embracing the stranger from the perspective of the local congregation, and trace its practical and theoretical implications. We will also follow acts or movements of the practice of hospitality that model how to welcome the stranger. We will attempt to answer practical questions such as how to welcome cultural diversity, how to evangelize among different groups, and how to embody reconciliation.

Finally, we will consider how being a company of strangers impacts on the heterogeneous church. For the church is not only called to welcome the stranger, but also to be a group of resident aliens, dependent on God's hospitality and yet in interaction with other strangers. The nature of the church in a multicultural society will be our primary focus.

Throughout this discussion we will intermingle metaphor, concept and practice as we explore the narrative of the stranger and the practice of hospitality.

11.2 THE INVITATION

The first and most crucial act of hospitality is the invitation. The invitation is the open door, the beckoning gesture, the warm smile and the appropriate word of welcome. Invitations recognize the need to cross a threshold, to open oneself and to create space for the other. However, invitations can also operate more out of cultural politeness than real intent. "Why don't you stay at my house tonight?" can be a veil for "I have to offer this to you, but I'm hoping you'll refuse." Such half-hearted invitations do not speak of true hospitality, but of its cultural counterfeit. We stiffen our hand while proffering the handshake. Disguised as good intent, the implicit message contradicts the overt invitation.

Charles Foster refers to this aspect of hospitality when he mentions that multicultural congregations need to demonstrate signs of hospitality rather than signs of hostility. He argues that congregations that are genuinely multicultural must embrace diversity in significant and hospitable ways. There will be signs that "reveal that differences are valued; that the experience of diverse peoples is honoured; and that the power dynamics of congregational life have been altered to celebrate the contributions of each racial and cultural group" (Foster 1996:58). Thus, hospitality for multicultural congregations must have a

recognition and valuing of diversity that results in both an explicit and implicit welcome for all cultural groups.

11.2.1 The Invitation to the Stranger at the Door

Some strangers knock on our doors. They seek an entrance. They come to us. The immigrant, the refugee and the homeless person are all examples of "needy" strangers, i.e. strangers who need our hospitality because they are without resources or a home. But other kinds of strangers find our homes too, especially if our home is a public place like a church. They stop by because they are curious, seeking or bored. How our home and church relates to them often indicates whether or not we have internalized the ethic of hospitality.

What kinds of invitations of welcome can the congregation in a diverse society provide for the strangers who walk through its doors? Foster suggests a number of activities to examine one's "welcome" and "hospitality." First, he suggests walking into and around the church to look for signs of welcome in the entryways, on the bulletin boards, in classes, worship areas, published materials, etc. The task is to see if different cultural groups feel themselves welcomed by the graphic, architectural, verbal and human portrayals that they see. Second, he suggests looking at the people representations in the church. Are the choirs mixed? Are leaders from different racial groups represented in public and visible roles and in the list of church officers? Do people sit in segregated patterns during worship? (1996:59-60)

It is recommended that churches perform this audit of their signs of welcome to see if they are genuinely valuing diversity or simply masquerading as hospitable hosts. White or black hegemony and other types of assimilated climates may result in mixed congregations but very little welcome for diverse groups.

All three congregations in this study seemed to have some degree of welcome in their worship places. People of all races described the congregations as warm, friendly and welcoming. Extending a welcome is part of the success stories of these congregations. However, it also appears that the welcome appeared limited and simply cordial at times. Blacks who came into the congregations in the early stages of transition reported a partial welcome and only partial inclusion. It appears that each congregation still needs to work on making their welcome more than a smile and a friendly attitude, and to translate it into the implicit framework of the congregation.

Welcomes are not always understood in the same way across cultures. Some whites spoke of preferring "quieter welcomes" that didn't make much of a public fuss. Blacks consistently referred to how welcomes in the church didn't say and do enough. Communitarian and individualistic values shape the way we perceive welcomes. Some welcomes can even feel threatening and confrontational. One older

white lady spoke of how she couldn't stand being enveloped in a large bear hug at the door. Space needs to be given for different kinds of welcoming in the church. The churches could probably benefit from more "greeting time" during the service, but such greeting needs to be done in culturally appropriate ways. Instead of statements like, "Let's all give each other a hug!" it's probably better to say, "Let's greet each other this morning with a handshake, hug, smile or other ways that feel comfortable for you and the other person." It seems from the interviews that everyone liked to be welcomed, but that some had a bigger space bubble than others (see Gudykunst and Kim 1992:233, 234 for a description of spatial zones).

Practicing intentionality in including others who lead the worship service helps to maintain the welcome. People identify with those who are like them, and sensing and seeing someone of your own racial and cultural group may help one to connect with the congregation. David Anderson mentions how he deliberately includes people of other races in his worship services and that he won't allow the service to begin unless he has the right mix of participants so that the music and praise and announcements reflect this diversity (2004:112). Charles Foster speaks of how some churches make sure that they have people of different colours at the door (1996:54) so that people of all groups can feel welcome. Such intentionality in embracing diversity helps to provide a welcome that goes deeper than cordial politeness.

However, creating an hospitable environment for all cultures is not easy. A number of people and cultures in South Africa regard integration itself as a form of inhospitality. They want to have a congregation that looks and thinks like they do. Some people will even stop attending a church if they find it too culturally diverse.

This brings us to our next question. If the church is to be welcoming, how can it welcome groups that want to preserve their distinctiveness and where social mixing is generally taboo or linguistically or culturally difficult? The church growth school has suggested that the answer to this question is the development of churches of homogeneous units where the church can naturally grow among existing class, ethnic, linguistic and racial lines. We critiqued this principle earlier, but does the practice of welcoming the stranger have anything to say to this challenge? We are called to show hospitality to the stranger, but the dilemma is that people may well choose not to attend a church simply because they are unwilling to cross the barrier of strangeness that exists between them and the congregation.

We answer first with a theological response. Precisely because God has called us to embrace the stranger in an act of reconciliation, we too are called to embrace other strangers. We cannot retreat into homogeneity (even with occasional "streaming across the bridges" to other cultures) without compromising the gospel. The church is called to be inclusive, and this inclusiveness arises out of the

permanent mat of welcome it has on its doorstep for all races, tribes, languages and peoples. The narratives of difference that tend to result in exclusion or separation and the narratives of unity that tend to result in homogenization or idealism must be reconsidered. The narrative of the stranger teaches us that great value is to be found in those who are different from us.

Palmer deals with the "ideology of intimacy" that plagues our concepts of public life and that has turned our perceptions of the church into an idealized family where everyone is close to each other. We tend to ignore our differences and to minimize conflict because we are dominated by expectations of closeness and warmth. Palmer comments:

> "When we envision the church as an idealized family, heterogeneity suffers as well. People with whom we cannot achieve intimacy or with whom we do not want to be intimate, are squeezed out. Since intimacy often depends on social and economic similarities between people, our church communities become preserves for people of kindred class and status. Such a church does everything in its power to eliminate the strange and cultivate the familiar. Such a church can neither welcome the stranger nor allow the stranger in each of us to emerge. Such a church is a barrier to the public life."

Palmer's solution is to re-envision the public life and the envisioning of a new welcoming community that helps move people from the familiarities of the private life into the strangeness of the public realm. He argues that the church can become a "halfway house" that moves "people from the fear of the world around them into a role as cocreators of a world which is both God's and their own" (1985:121). Once we do this, we see the church through less romantic eyes, recognizing that "there is no place to hide from the problems of human coexistence" (1985:122) and more likely to work through the strangeness we find in others and even ourselves.

However, the very fact that we are called to welcome the stranger means that we cannot alienate for the sake of a theological ideal of reconciliation. Our welcome must include a welcome for sinners alongside of saints. Racists and the ethnocentric are invited into God's kingdom (consider, for instance, the disciples). But how is that welcome to be extended when the very form in which it comes creates such a hurdle for unbelievers?

One way to reach those caught up in ethnocentricity is to provide a welcome that is genuine and therefore surprisingly attractive. We have seen how the welcome that was extended in the congregations that we have studied became a drawing force. Members in each of these congregations stated how important belonging to a "warm and friendly" congregation was for them. This indicates that warmth and friendliness are key reasons why people choose to remain in a congregation. Sincerity, warmth and genuine welcome help to overcome many of the barriers of race and class. At least some people will be attracted to a mixed congregation precisely because they discover warmth there that does not seem to be based on colour or class. Churches provide homes of hospitality that become havens of refuge from a polarizing society (see DeYoung et al. 2003:141).

One dramatic example of a welcome extended that transformed a racist occurred with Eugene Terre'Blance. Eugene Terre'Blance was known as a popular and extreme proponent of the *volkstaat* (national state for white people). His racist and violent treatment of a black worker eventually landed him in prison on a long-term sentence. A black Seventh-day Adventist lay Bible worker was visiting the prison and heard that Eugene Terre'Blance was incarcerated there. He asked for permission to visit him and was granted it. In spite of Terre'Blance's inhospitality to his first approach, the young black member kept visiting him and attempting to befriend him. Every time he approached Terre'Blance, he would be given a long lecture but choose to listen patiently. Eventually, his persistence paid off, and Terre'Blance began listening to the young man share his faith. Soon Terre'Blance was taking Bible studies, and the two formed a strong and deep friendship. This led to Terre'Blance's famous prison conversion. A few months after his conversion, Terre'Blance was invited to speak at the Seventh-day Adventist's Laymen's Institute. In his testimony he described how he had been a Zacchaeus, sitting in the tree, waiting for the Lord to pass by. He felt alone, for his friends and family had deserted him. Then in a moving and graphic moment, he called the young black worker up onto the stage and enveloped him in a hug, for he said that this young black man was the friend who had brought him Jesus. The mixed audience of whites, blacks, Asians and coloureds, erupted in applause and tears at the sight of this former public racist won over by the love of Christ and the hospitality of the stranger.

This example not only teaches us the power of acceptance and welcome, but also teaches us that people do not always stumble into a church to find a welcome. More and more often, if our hospitality is to be successful, it must be extended beyond our homes to the marketplaces. This is particularly true because we know that mixed congregations in South Africa are likely to have greater growth among people of colour than among whites. In order for multiracial congregations to not be simply transitional, they need to find ways to extend the welcome back to the original racial group (e.g. whites), and to seek greater growth among that racial group. Some of the remaining members may have already begun to feel like strangers in their own congregation, and we need to make the church a home for all nations.

11.2.2 The Invitation to the Stranger in the Market Place

One aspect missing from Foster's book but vitally important to continued growth among all people groups is targeted evangelism. In targeted evangelism, specific groups are targeted in order to provide a welcome and invitation to them. Most churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist church, are fairly good at doing this kind of targeted evangelism in foreign contexts.

One example of this kind of approach is an organization called Adventist Frontier Missions. Missionaries are sent into "unreached" villages and cities. They live among the inhabitants, learn the language,

develop friendships, provide resources and as they get an opportunity, share the gospel with the target group. The invitation is couched in culturally acceptable ways because the missionaries have spent time getting to know the cultural idioms and dynamics of their host tribe.

In a similar way, congregations need to know how to share the gospel with those people groups that are "unreached" in their own neighbourhoods. This is part of extending the invitation to the stranger. In Old Testament times, people would wait at the gate, marketplace or city wall, looking for opportunity to invite strangers into their homes and to practice hospitality (see Pohl 1999:95). Within the marketplace of today's culture, we need to develop strategies for reaching out to different cultural groups in the public space in which they work and play.

Congregations need to develop ideas and strategies for reaching strangers in their local marketplaces. They need to study the thought patterns, habits, idioms and needs of secular white people, emerging black businessmen, displaced refugees and transient student groups. It is not feasible to reach all groups at the same time, but targeted evangelism can be successful by both focussed programs (such as traditional evangelistic meetings) and by training, equipping and listening to people who can work with that particular cultural group. These may or may not be people skilled at doing cross-cultural evangelism, but either way it is normally best if they are people who feel at home in the culture they are trying to reach. In this way they become "ethnic brokers" (Erickson 1993), helping the rest of the congregation to reach out to a culture with which they are unfamiliar, and helping people that they reach to adapt to the local congregation.

Hospitality involves not just reaching the person in the marketplace, but inviting them into our private space. Extending an invitation is therefore not necessarily bringing a person to church, but rather inviting that person into your life. It is a sharing of your space, a sacrificial welcome and a learning to reach out of the homogeneous cocoons in which we often find ourselves. As Parker Palmer comments:

> "The stranger is found in public, but the means of hospitality are private. Hospitality means inviting the stranger into our private space, whether that be the space of our own home or the space of our personal awareness and concern….. Our private space is suddenly enlarged; no longer tight and cramped and restricted, but open and expansive and free" (1985:69).

The invitation is based on Christ's own invitation. He gave the invitation not simply as the transcendent God, but as the Incarnational Servant. We too, can follow that example and invite others by stepping into their shoes and taking the journey with them. Therefore the invitation is incarnational (see Lingenfelter and Mayers 1986:38ff). If churches are going to remain successfully heterogeneous, then they will have to actively seek the stranger in ways that the stranger can understand. Like Karl Barth's analogy of Christ in the Prodigal Son, they will need to travel to a far country in search of the stranger. All the churches in this study were struggling with evangelism. Unless they can find a way to tailor their evangelism for

different groups of people, they will ultimately fail in showing hospitality to all the strangers in their midst.

11.3 PROVIDING A GIFT (COSTLY SACRIFICE)

The next stage of biblical hospitality involves the provision of a gift. The killing of the most important fattened animal, the sharing of the last oil and flour, the lavish provision for the guest—these are considered appropriate responses of hospitality. If congregations in transition are to learn from the practice of hospitality, then they must learn that it costs (much like reconciliation).

In ancient Eastern terms, the gift established the friendship and became the basis for a new covenant between guest and host. By the gift, the guest knew the host's intentions and could trust himself in the host's presence. The gift established trust and bonded stranger and host together.

Christ was the gift of God provided to bring reconciliation between God and man. God's hospitality was shown in the most tangible and costly sacrifice that could be given. Parker Palmer in discussing hospitality calls the Christian to "witness to the possibility of compassion in a world of pain" (1985:112). Hospitality involves crucifixion for "the way to true life always passes through some kind of death" (ibid.). Christians see in the image of the "suffering servant" the way to maintain a costly hospitality even to our enemies.

In like manner, congregations learning to show hospitality to strangers need to practice gift giving. Gift giving is the willingness to take what belongs to me and to offer it freely to the other person. Instead of the church being "my church," one offers it to the other person so it becomes "your church." When we proclaim that we are not willing to change "our worship style," we need to turn that into a gift and ask how we can offer worship as a gift to the Divine Guest, and in turn to the other guests in our audience. Henri Nouwen talks about hospitality in the following way:

> "The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create an emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free, free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances, free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own" (Nouwen 1975:51).

At Sandton, one of the biggest stumbling block for some of the older members is that they feel that Sandton is being stolen from them. "Why can't they go to one of the other churches in the area? Why are they taking over our church?" one lady wrote in an email. But such an attitude forgets the nature of hospitality. In hospitality, we offer the gift of our homes, our provisions and our livelihood to the stranger. Is this dangerous? Perhaps, and we shall deal with that question shortly. But more important, it

is costly, and yet this is exactly what churches are called to do. Their resources need to be made available for needy strangers to experience welcome and hospitality.

The costliness of the sacrifice is based on the cross. At the cross, self-giving love paved the way to reconciliation by an infinite sacrifice. In the same way, our own reconciliation with others may come at a sacrifice. Jesus chose a long, painful journey down the *Via Dolorosa* so that we might not have to walk that path. Therefore we cannot expect grace to come cheaply, for the original gift was so costly (cf. Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*).

Abraham's servant Eliezer offered gifts when he met the stranger Rebekah at the well. That gift giving ultimately led to Rebekah being offered as a gift herself. The giving of gifts establishes a mutual gift giving that extends far beyond the original gift. Of course, the gift should not be given in order to create another a pattern of gift giving, but simply because of the relationship itself.

DeYoung et al. comment in their discussion of multiracial churches that not everyone in a multiracial worship setting will be completely satisfied all the time. There has to be give and take.

Congregants learn to offer gifts of time, worship, money and resources to each other as part of their practice of hospitality. It matters not the size of the gift, but its worth to both giver and receiver. We are asked to give that which is most precious to us (like the widow's mite). For many members, our comfort zones are closest to our hearts. We need to be willing to surrender even these for the sake of hospitality.

11.3 FEASTING AT THE TABLE

The next movement of hospitality is connected with the previous one. In giving of gifts the way is prepared for table fellowship. Codes of table purity as well as social regulations prohibited people from eating together during Jesus' time.[115] Jesus' inclusive table fellowship showed hospitality to the outcasts and the friendless, and thus broke down this societal barrier (see Rosado 1990:85; DeYoung 1997:165-168). This helped pave the way for Paul's own stand against separation at the table when he opposed Peter at Antioch. John Koenig notes that most hospitality in the New Testament is somehow connected with feasting (2001:127). The table provides a place to let our guard down and share in common human fellowship. A feast is more than simply a meal, for resources are more generously provided for a feast. We also notice the spirituality of this feast, for in the "breaking of bread" the divine host is revealed and we are united in "communion" with each other.

[115] For a discussion of table fellowship, see section 10.4.6.

What does this feasting motif mean for the congregation in transition? Firstly, it implies that the gathering together for mutual worship and sharing. In this fellowship there are no boundaries, for Christians, like Jesus, practice an open table. One of the most profound moments of the open table is when communion (the Lord's Supper) is served. Adventists traditionally practice foot-washing as part of the communion service. A number in the interviews mentioned foot-washing as a powerful and meaningful experience of reconciling with other races. Here participants kneel at each other's feet and engage in an ordinance of humility that prepares them for the "communion" itself. The sharing of bread and wine symbolizes the common feasting that each has as a result of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. Adventists practice an open communion, meaning that any believer (regardless of their denomination) can participate in this ritual. However, the "open communion" idea needs to go much further. It needs to be extended to all strangers who enter the congregation, with a special emphasis on reaching across races.

The Sabbath provides a special time of nurturing this feasting and fellowshipping concept. As we noted from Jurgen Moltmann earlier, the Sabbath is the feast of creation. Adventists can draw more on the tradition of the Sabbath to break down walls of partition between races as well as to engage in service to needy humanity, thus broadening their inclusiveness and care for vulnerable strangers.[116]

What should worship look like in this feast of hospitality? Like all feasts, more than one option must be provided. The feast should include a variety of foods that reflect the diversity around the table. So in the worship service we need to expand the range of worship choices available to the participants (Anderson 2004:110). Revelation 7 shows that all nations gather together to praise God in harmony. Thus, part of our welcome means providing for the different music, worship and preaching tastes of those who gather around the table based on our eschatological vision of the church (DeYoung et al. 2003:176). However, like all feasts, certain rituals and rules dictate what food goes onto the table, when it is eaten and how it is eaten. This means that the congregation will try to embrace a multitude of cultures in its worship, but will

[116] This was one of the essential declarations of the document submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Based on an analysis of its stand as a commandment-keeping people, it notes the failure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to live out its beliefs. When it comes to the Sabbath it makes this poignant observation. "But, perhaps most poignantly of all, we have to ask how we could claim to properly keep the Sabbath holy without heeding its explicit demand for practical justice, co-humanity, deliverance and healing (Isaiah 1:10-18; 56:1-7; 58; Matt 11:28-12:8)? Do we not have to explicitly confess that precisely as *Seventh-day* Adventists we should have done more to exemplify the meaning of the biblical Sabbath both within our own community and in our external dealings with society? Furthermore, in the light of the biblical extension of the humanitarian implications of the Sabbath to the jubilee year, should we not have realized that we are not at liberty to treat the land itself as an inalienable possession, but rather as a trust for responsible stewardship (Lev 25)? For surely true Sabbath-keeping and keeping silence in the face of oppression are mutually exclusive (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15)." (Unpublished document presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1998).

also seek to develop its own particular worship style with rules and rituals that it can claim as its own. This worship style will reflect biblical principles that unify it and give it coherence (like the eating of the Lord's Supper), but it will also have an integrative and embracing role that reflects different traditions. George Yancey comments that Christian leaders should attempt to "balance the distinct racial elements in the worship style in such a way so that none of the racial groups feels short-changed by the worship style" (2003:73). He suggests that one way to accomplish this is to create a new style or even rotate the styles so that no one group is neglected (2003:75-77).

For instance, it was noted in all the congregations that there was an appreciation for different preaching styles. Whites could appreciate the rich imagery and passion of black preaching, and blacks could appreciate the conversational or informational approaches of white preaching. Within each sermon there was generally food for the congregation to feast on. However, this food still needed to be based on the Word of God. This is the integrative and unifying force across the different styles of preaching. When disputes did arise in the congregations in our study over the preaching, it was often over content more than it was over style.

Fellowship lunches are generally not as successful in these congregations as they used to be. The communitarian and individualistic ethics operating in black and white cultures respectively have turned fellowship lunches into black events. The concept of hospitality suggests that this needs to be reversed. However, understanding of the different cultures means that instead of mandating a regular lunch, ways can be found to bring the cultures together around a meal for special events. It seems that whites can be motivated to attend the lunch if they know that it is only an occasional event. Thus, having an "All Nations" heritage potluck may be a good quarterly activity. In addition to this, finding ways to help people mix in private meals may be another approach for re-establishing cross-cultural food gatherings. Asking families to invite someone of another culture over for dinner may be one way to bring a stranger to the feasting table.

The difficulties of not having enough resources to be hospitable are balanced by God's own generosity. As we partner with God, He supplies the lack of resources (see Koenig 2001:26ff).

11.4 SHARING STORIES

During the meal, and following it, guests and hosts begin their conversations. The conversations turn into stories, and the stories become part of the memory of the occasion. In this story sharing, the guest may suddenly become the host, as attention centres on the life and experience of this stranger in the midst of the household. Children gather around the fireplace and listen as the stranger eases into his chair and

begins to recount tales of faraway lands and places. One by one, people in the circle share, and everyone participates in this remarkable telling and retelling of our diverse lives.

For a congregation in transition, this sharing of stories is part of the practice of hospitality. As we learn to hear each other's stories, we come to understand and be critiqued by others' journeys of faith. We learn to empathize with their loss, appreciate their wisdom, laugh with their joys and be strengthened by their resolve.

Developing the art of conversation and sharing is critical in the success of a congregation that is becoming heterogeneous. Stories have an element of surprise inherent in them that enables us to see beyond our prejudices and stereotypes. By not expecting the outcome, we are enabled to see as we would not have seen before. Thus a story from a stranger gives us a new perspective on our faith and on our journey.

Charles Foster in his work on multicultural congregations emphasizes the importance of "congregational conversation" for these kinds of congregations. He suggests that we need to legitimize different voices in the congregation, giving them an opportunity to join in various forms of formal and informal dialogue in the congregation (1996:82-87). However, in doing so we recognize the ambiguity of conversations, and there are sometimes incommensurable differences between varying perspectives and stories in the congregation (Foster 1996:93).

Congregants in each congregation need to communicate their meanings better. C.A. Bowers and David J. Flinders have observed that communicative competence ultimately gives people the political capacity to participate fully in the decision-making processes of a group (as noted in Foster 1996:79). Communication is vital to the success of intercultural transition (Gudykunst and Kim 1992:363).

The importance of story telling is that it helps to create shared meaning. Stories draw on common human values of excitement and anxiety, joy and happiness, pain and pleasure, loyalty and betrayal, and are often translated into other cultures and languages. Christians also see their shared story in creation, the cross and consummation. These stories, not only of our otherness, but also of our commonness, create a common bonding in the congregation. What are ways in which the congregation can share their stories with one another?

Public sharing is when the congregation nurtures the telling of stories from the congregation. Brooklyn has a testimony time during its services, when people get to tell of where they need prayer or where they have had joys and triumphs. As a result, there is bonding that takes place between the races as they share

with each other. Outside of the service, an older white lady will tell a younger black man that she has been praying for his refugee visa status. Humanness is seen underneath the different skins.

But public sharing need not be limited to worship service time. Foster mentions ways in which congregations can involve conversation in the practicing and planning for programs and in forums to specifically address issues in which a multiplicity of views is needed (Foster 1996:84, 86, 96). Thus, the congregations studied need to expand their times of conversation and allow inclusion of a greater number of voices in these activities.

Private sharing of stories is probably where the three congregations studied were at their weakest. The sharing of stories and experiences outside of Sabbath worship hours remains limited in all three churches. The practice of hospitality means a creating of space where people of all races can share their stories with each other. However, public and personal sharing plays different roles and has different expectations (Keifert 1992:88-93).

Again we see how the drama of hospitality is linked together, for without the invitation, the gift and the table fellowship, developing spaces for true story telling will be limited.

George Yancey discovered that network multiracial churches[117] are the most likely to grow of all multiracial churches (Yancey 2003:59). This is because these churches developed friendships across races on a personal level (the ultimate reconciliation level—see 10.3.1). Church members must learn to hear and share each others' stories in order to effectively break down the prevalent racial discrimination in society (see also Yancey 2003:41).

One of the significant areas needing to be addressed in each of these churches is the lack of willingness of white members to engage in talk about racism. Peart comments that the "past is the past" to many whites, but not to blacks (Peart 2000:168), and that whites need to understand black pain and resultant anger. This will only happen through the telling of stories (Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:7) that release our pain and provide an opportunity for embrace between the representative victims and perpetrators.

Kujawa-Holbrook states that "raising the issues of race in many congregations can be risky, but the question is whether or not we think our faith communities are resilient enough to withstand the evils of our age." She goes on to state her hopeful conviction, "I believe that congregations are in fact one of the few places in our society where people of diverse backgrounds can work together constructively for the good of humankind" (2002:3).

[117] These churches attract people of other races into their churches through their social networks.

Kujawa-Holbrook also gives several suggestions for how congregations can begin talking about race and racism:

1. Begin with yourself.
2. Reflect and discern your call to multiracial community from a faith perspective.
3. Honour your own experience and the experience of others.
4. Be honest about your feelings.
5. Look for understanding on several levels: emotional, intellectual and spiritual.
6. Develop intercultural communication skills.
7. Learn about other cultures.
8. Identify resources and networks in the community.
9. Face conflicts and the people who disagree with you openly.
10. Prepare yourself for the mistakes you will make; learn from them.
11. Seek support and assistance from within and outside the congregation.
12. Pray and celebrate (Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:4).

The telling of stories provides a place for congregational sharing beyond the superficial scripts that often dominate congregational liturgy. Our sharing needs to provide an opportunity for diverse members to share diverse perspectives in a meaningful way. One of the issues that needs to be addressed is the issue of racism, and it is only in the telling of and the listening to of our stories that we can find common healing for our memories (Volf 1996:131ff.).

11.5 PROVIDING A ROOM

When the dishes are washed, the fire is burning low and children are yawning, the stranger retires to his room. Providers of hospitality will often provide one of the best rooms in the house. The children may be moved together into another room to make space for the special guest. This is a place for the sojourner to not only lay his head, but also to have his space. In this room, the host tries to make the guest as comfortable as possible. Here, like Elijah and Elisha, guests will have space to reflect, meditate and discover themselves.

For churches undergoing cultural change, this can sometimes be the most difficult concept to master, but each cultural group needs its space. In order to prevent simple hegemony and assimilation or even forced integration, cultures need their place to develop, reflect and feel comfortable. This has been expressed in different ways, "a church within a church"[118] (DeYoung et al. 2003:141-142) and "a house with many rooms" (Elphick and Davenport 1997:12), but the concepts are the same. We provide space to be different and to feel security. We also need to allow members of particular races to support each other because they understand the particular struggles of the members of that group (Yancey 2003:154).

[118] They comment that in this kind of situation the overall membership is multiracial, but special fellowship groups exist to meet the specific needs of particular populations.

We see another room where hospitality is provided to a group of thirteen strangers. This is the Upper Room, and only the disciples are invited to a special feast. This could seem like an exclusive affair, but this is the last time this group is to get together, and they need time alone. The room provides their sanctuary for their final supper. In this room, Jesus ministers to his disciples and not to the large crowds. It becomes a poignant memory and bonding event that etches itself on two thousand years of ritual in the church.

Sometimes we need to provide a room where people can be comfortable, be themselves and minister to others in their closest networks. This may mean a place where people who are Zulu-speaking can get together and not have to speak in anything else than their home language. This may mean the opportunity for whites to fellowship with and minister to other whites. Indians can get together and share curry and rice the way they like it—hot! If we continually ask people to live outside of their comfort zones, they ultimately get over-anxious and fatigued (Gudykunst and Kim 1992:358). So, in a healthy church, hospitality allows a room (space) to reflect, get comfortable and minister to oneself and others.

Within the church, when this suggestion is made it begins to sound like apartheid—separate development for each race. But there is a fundamental difference. Separation for reflection and ministry is based on a fundamental unity, not a theology of difference. We know we belong to the same house, and yet we experience a chance to be ourselves and to find our own identity both with and apart from one another. We cannot mandate separate churches, but we can allow cultural space within those churches.

"The essence of hospitality—and of the public life—is that we let our differences, our mutual strangeness, be as they are, while still acknowledging the unity that lies beneath them" (Palmer 1985:130). However, giving space to the other person to be themselves without making them conform to our expectations goes against the basic dynamics of community formation. Since communities are formed by boundary markers, strangers threaten our community by "blurring the boundaries" (ibid.). Therefore communities must not only welcome others but also come to terms with its need to be different and to be set apart. How can strangers become a part of our communities while still being "different" from us?

11.6 PART OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The final movement of hospitality is when we embrace the stranger, and they become part of our households and part of our families. The person who was once just a guest now becomes an integral part of the family. They help and are helped. They share in the joys and disappointments of the family, and the family laughs when they laugh and cries when they cry. They hope the "stranger" never leaves.

Paul writes to the Gentiles that they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Christian hospitality moves those who are different from us away from the orbit of being a stranger to the world of being a family member.

For the congregation undergoing transition to heterogeneity, relation to each other is based not on their strangeness, but on their common identity in Christ. Through Christ, they have been made brothers and sisters with each other, for He is their older brother and the Head of the family. One recognizes that there are differences, but that we are intimately connected. Seventh-day Adventists have expressed this unity-in-diversity in this way:

> The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the ones of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children (*Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, Number 13).*

Palmer also notes that when "a community's identity is rooted in the truth that we are all members of one another—that our deepest identity is in our commonality in God—then it can embrace the stranger with grace and ease" (1985:131). When our self-identity is not at stake, we can afford to be ethnosensitive instead of being ethnocentric. When God stands in our midst as the one who offers hospitality then our conflict and unity is mediated through him (ibid. 132). When God becomes the host, we meet in hopefulness of peace and reconciliation beyond our strangeness.

In this respect, Foster notes that simply honouring diversity is not enough. Since culturally diverse congregations are fragile fellowships, there need to be times when a congregation can "gather" people into its fellowship. People need to feel that they "have become part of something bigger and greater than they are" (1996:63). This best happens through "rituals of acceptance," such as baptism and other sacraments which need to be practised in culturally acceptable and affirming ways.

However, even this is not enough. Foster argues that we need solidarity—a commonness that transcends our differences. In this we need to take seriously the ideas of others, while still maintaining our own identity.[119] This hopefully leads to what Sharon Welch calls the "mutuality of critique" whereby both

[119] Foster refers to an interesting illustration from Walter Brueggemann based on 2 Kings 18-19. In this encounter between the Jews and the Assyrians, the Jews needed to talk behind their own wall before they could engage in public discussions with the Assyrians at the wall. Foster then draws a conclusion, "Strategic solidarity across racial and cultural lines also requires the renewal and intensification of the identification of each group with its own heritage so that its members might bring its wisdom and experience to the place of meeting with others" (1996:68).

groups can see themselves more honestly because they have looked at themselves through the eyes of another (see Foster 1996:69).

One of the challenges in becoming part of the household of God is engaging in reconciliation. Jesus reminds us that before we can offer our gift of praise, we must first be "reconciled to thy brother" (Matthew 5:24). We have been given "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:20), and part of having a brother is coming together in unity with him. This was the sin of the prodigal son, who turned on his brother and treated him as a stranger, whereas the Father treated him as he was—a long-lost member of the family.

If the multicultural congregation fails to achieve reconciliation while it practices integration, it is practicing what Peart calls "irrational integration," where limited integration occurs, but structural racism and ethnocentric attitudes are not rooted out (2000:138). He goes on to state that, "Racial reconciliation is not an option for Christians and racial reconciliation is never easy" (2000:164).

However, being members of the household of God also brings with it an appreciation of diversity. So the heterogeneous church seeks to find ways to value the diversity of its members. Each member has a part, and each member is valuable (1 Corinthians 12). We need to find ways to allow diversity without compromising our essential unity. This is what all households do.

Being a member of the household, therefore, also implies certain responsibilities. There is a code of conduct for the household—a name that they must uphold. The concept of "resident aliens" implies that we live the by the ethical code of the higher citizenship that we have obtained. Our real home is in the kingdom, and we live by the kingdom values of our new citizenship. We are therefore what Hauerwas and Willimon call a "contrast community" (1989). Accepting other strangers does not imply an abandonment of ethics, but a new ethic of the gospel that critiques our cultural ethics as well as helping us to understand the gospel better as we witness to it.

Our responsibility is not only in our ethics, but also in our witness. We are called to welcome other strangers who also need to be joined to the household of God. We recognize that we too were "strangers in the land of Egypt" until the invitation to God's banquet came to us. So we in turn love the stranger, seeking to draw them into the same joyous feast that we have found.

11.7 FELLOW-PILGRIMS: A COMPANY OF STRANGERS

Our final point is that the church is a "company of strangers" who are walking together on a common pilgrimage. We therefore have the consciousness of the same destination, but also a realization of how different each of our journeys to get there is.

In the churches in this study, there was sometimes a loss of this solidarity in destination and journey. Recovering the sense of being a "company of strangers" (Palmer 1985) helps us to understand how we can join together while still engaging in both separate and corporate conversations. We travel together and mix together, enhancing our sense of solidarity through rituals of acceptance, but sometimes we must also walk in smaller and more intimate groups.[120]

Being a gathering of strangers implies that we will have to live with our differences. For heterogeneous churches, these differences can be many, for in addition to the regular interpersonal challenges there are cultural and racial challenges to overcome. Rather than trying to address each cultural issue raised in this study, we suggest the following general principles for developing an inclusive community, taken from George Yancey:

1. Develop an inclusive worship in both its musical and non-musical forms.
2. Develop diverse leadership that represents different racial groups.
3. Have an overarching goal which different racial groups can "buy into."
4. Become intentional about maintaining a multiracial mixture.
5. Develop personal skills in the areas of sensitivity, patience, empowerment and intercultural competence.
6. Move to or remain in an area that is multicultural.
7. Develop adaptability and empathy (Yancey 2003:71-151).

However, simply practicing inclusiveness is not enough. We need to be transformative in our approach. This requires not only an acceptance of our unity-in-diversity as "a company of strangers" but also a recognition of our common destination that ultimately brings us into this journey. Therefore, the promise of the pilgrimage is the shalom where peace and unity will reign amidst our diversity. Our pilgrimage ends in heaven where united in Christ we stand as a witness through the ages that God's pilgrim people have come home. This eschatological vision helps us to survive the difficulties of living, working and travelling together.

[120] Both Palmer (1983:108) and Keifert (1992:24ff) critique the ideology of intimacy in which public worship is reduced to psychological intimacy at the expense of ritual. The goal is not just to bring intimacy into worship, but to make worship rituals hospitable. What we need, they argue, is both intimacy (private sphere) and ritual (public worship) in order to find belonging in Christian community.

11.8 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO HOSPITALITY

However, there are challenges with the practice of hospitality to stranger that we have outlined in this narrative. Christine Pohl, in her extensive and historical work on the practice of hospitality admits, "The actual story of Christian hospitality as an expression of care, respect, recognition, and equality is not without serious problems, failures and ambiguities" (Pohl 1999:78).

11.8.1 Fear of the Stranger

Firstly, there is the danger of the stranger. Since the stranger is "unknown," they also carry attendant risks. Not all strangers are trustworthy. Strangers throughout history have been known to deceive, steal, kill, rape, and destroy. The stranger may despise, reject or abuse our hospitality. Since we fear the unknown, our cautiousness can thwart our intended hospitality. "Don't speak to strangers" is the axiom we've heard since we were children. We are taught to fear strangers instead of showing them hospitality.

The fear of the stranger manifests itself in various ways in a congregation in transition. Sometimes whites seem "inhospitable" to blacks because they don't know what to say or are afraid they will say the wrong thing (Peart 2000:170). Blacks may react negatively to whites because of past pain (Peart 2000:167) or because they have a fundamental distrust of hypocritical white overtures (Anderson 2004:68ff). In a racially divided society, some suspicion of each other's motives is bound to occur (see chapter nine).

An incident occurred in one of the churches in this study where a group from America were due to come to the church. One of the white elders agreed to host them for a meal in his home. However, on the day when the group arrived, the elder discovered that he was having a busload of "black" Americans come to eat at his house. He anxiously rushed to the pastor for advice. "What should I do? Should I hide the soap? Should I hide the towels? Will they take everything I have as souvenirs back to America? I'm not sure I can do this." The pastor reassured him and the meal went ahead without incident. However, the fears were real and they almost blocked the extension of hospitality.

11.8.1.1 Hospitality at the Gate

Pohl suggests that one of the ways to reduce the risks attendant with hospitality and to encourage hospitality among the more fearful is to make hospitality more public. She points to the fact that Old Testament accounts show hospitality beginning in a public place. The stranger was first encountered there and then invited into a private household. This is the value of the church—the church can provide a community setting in which initial minimal relations can be established.

> "When there is no way to mediate strangeness, when there is no space or means by which people can safely and comfortably engage in initial encounters with one another, then potential hosts worry about

> the danger and deception and strangers are less frequently welcomed in. Hospitality begins at the gate, in the doorway, on the bridges between public and private space" (Pohl 1999:95).

The church can be proactive in encouraging social interaction within the public church environment, thus opening the way for invitations to hospitality in each other's homes. Building trust and enabling reconciliation are processes that take time and involve a long term commitment (DeYoung 1997:66ff). Building a hospitable environment at a church helps people to carry that hospitable environment into their homes. As anxiety is reduced in friendly and safe contacts publicly, it becomes possible to make hospitality happen privately.

11.8.1.2 Hospitality as Christ's Welcome

The fear of the stranger that makes us inhospitable is analysed by Moltmann in *The Open Church*. He argues that self-confirmation is at the root of the problem. We alienate others who are not like ourselves because, "people who are different from us, that is, people whose thoughts, feelings, and desires are different from ours, make us feel insecure" (1978:30). This insecurity lies at the root of racism as attempts to put down others are simply attempts to justify ourselves. He suggests that the answer to this problem is found in "accepting one another as Christ has accepted you" (Romans 15:7). Because Christ has welcomed us through suffering, our acceptance and confirmation through him allows us to welcome others. We recognize, indeed, that Christ has already welcomed them. "Then we no longer feel that we are made insecure by others because we no longer need self-confirmation. The person who is different becomes for us, precisely because of that difference, a surprise which we gladly accept" (Moltmann 1978:31).

11.8.1.3 The Stranger as Christ

In order to reach out to strangers, we need to see common ground between us and them. This is built, first of all, on the common humanity that we all have. However, Jesus provides an even more powerful argument for showing hospitality to the stranger. He claims that "*I* was a stranger, and you took me in." Thus, "Jesus, the most desired guest, comes in the form of the vulnerable stranger. The possibility that hosts are welcoming Jesus can overcome resistance and fear" (Pohl 1999:97).

Again, it is important in this discussion to note that hospitality is different from a celebration of "otherness." Simply celebrating the stranger's differences may lead to leaving him standing out in the cold instead of inviting him in. Pohl argues that "hospitality has depended on recognizing our commonalities rather than our differences, seeing strangers as neighbors, brothers and sisters" (1999:98).

10.5.1.5 Conclusion

The fear of the stranger that holds back hospitality can thus be overcome by the use of public space and a theology of acceptance. However, the danger of the stranger is not the only obstacle to the practice of hospitality. Hospitality can become an insult to the freedom and dignity of the other. Sometimes hospitality can be seen as paternalistic and condescending and even resulting in unhealthy dependencies.

11.8.2 Hospitality and Respect

There is a tension inherent within the practice of hospitality. While true hospitality is meant to uplift, welcome and develop reciprocal love, often hospitality can turn into a hierarchical relationship where the guest always remains a guest and the host dictates the rules of hospitality. Hospitality that serves as a front for colonialism or paternalism is rightly to be avoided. We must respect the rights of the other, even as we seek to welcome them. We have seen that biblical hospitality teaches us that the guest and host relationships remain interchangeable. We welcome someone in order to be pleasantly surprised by them. We have to promote hospitality in ways that show respect and dignity while allowing freedom.

11.8.3 Hospitality and Boundaries

A related challenge to the practice of hospitality is when the needs of the strangers overwhelm our resources. As increasingly large numbers of people make use of our hospitality, and as our hospitality is publicized, we may end up being drained by the large crowds at our doorstep. When do we say no and turn a "guest" away? Christine Pohl calls this the "fragility of hospitality" (1999:127ff). She shares that "people proclaim there is 'no more room' when they feel overwhelmed by cultural distance or socio-economic need, or when they feel threatened by the increasing power of strangers who have come to share our resources. "Strangers are then recast as enemies, threats to the community" (ibid. 99).

To prevent this disintegration of hospitality, it is important to develop guidelines or boundaries that can protect the host community and transition them through the difficulties of practicing hospitality. However, the process of working out boundaries is always difficult—for they are a concession to human finiteness.

> Boundaries are troublesome in the context of hospitality for a number of reasons. By definition, hospitality is gracious and generous. Limiting hospitality seems to undermine what is fundamental to the practice. But boundaries are also a problem because so many of them are hidden…. we are unlikely to notice how even our own occupations, neighbourhoods, and churches can, in themselves, create boundaries that shut out most strangers, especially needy ones (Pohl 1999:129).

Communities who fail to make adequate boundaries often disintegrate under the pressure of providing for the stranger in their midst. However, the Christian view of hospitality challenges us to enlarge our borders and share our resources more generously. This is what Pohl calls "the king of courage that lives

close to our limits, continually pressing against the possible, yet always aware of the incompleteness and the inadequacy of our own responses" (1999:131, 132).

John Koenig suggests that Christian hospitality is based on God's generosity. When we partner with God, he promises to supply the lack created by the sacrifice. "The person who has is someone who receives God's abundance… and draws upon it to deal generously with his neighbors and therefore receives 'more' for his or her sharing. The one 'who has not' is blind to God's riches and must therefore… lay up treasures on earth" (2001:37, 38). He adds that "hospitality, as understood in the New Testament writings, presumes a reciprocity between God's abundance and human acts of sacrifice" (ibid. 130).

We need to recognize, though, the tension between the already and the not yet. The church is not the kingdom itself, but only a sign or sacrament of the kingdom. Agents of hospitality are faced with fatigue in continuously going out of their comfort zones and living on the edge of their resources (see Pohl 1999:134). Spencer Perkins refers to "racial fatigue" when people have to constantly deal with issues of race and racism (Rice and Perkins 1993:23ff). DeYoung comments that "people who daily press against the walls of systemic injustice while simultaneously dealing with the individual bigots they encounter have little energy left for efforts toward unity" (1997:12). Kujawa-Holbrook says that churches that have to deal with racism and often face a certain kind of "death" in the process (2002:3). Hospitality is taxed by the endurance needed to constantly embrace the other.

The solution to this challenge to the practice of hospitality requires wisdom in working through the tension between defining personal boundaries and yet providing a welcome and sharing of resources with the strangers in our midst. Boundaries (expanded and challenged by courageous faith) enable us to deal hospitably with strangers over an extended period of time. They provide limits that help us to endure the difficulties of dealing with otherness. And yet, even these limits must be stretched. However, this very practice of grappling with shared resources and the stranger is essential to public life. Palmer comments:

> But in public we are constantly reminded that the foundation of life together is not the intimacy of friends but the capacity of strangers to share a common territory, common resources, common problems—without ever becoming friends…. The problem of scarcity is one of the basic challenges and sources of public life…. Since we live in a world of shortages, a public must form to decide how these scarce resources can be distributed to the optimum benefit of all. This process of "deciding" can be rudimentary and nearly unconscious. A crowd on a city sidewalk is learning to share the scarce resource of sidewalk space….
>
> When fire ravages a barn, and neighbors gather to rebuild it at a fraction of the time and cost it would have taken the owner to do it alone, an abundance is created through group effort. Even when the public simply shares scarcity without generating a real abundance of new goods and services, the simple fact of sharing creates a meaningful sense of abundance, the abundance which comes from knowing we do not stand alone or in constant competition with each other but that mutual aid is available (Palmer 1985:40-42).

11.8.4 Hospitality and Boundary Markers

Yet another challenge in showing hospitality to strangers is that we may take care of the stranger while neglecting our own family. Two biblical stories bring this out forcibly. We see Lot offering his virgin daughters to the people of Sodom in order to protect the strangers (Genesis 19) and we hear of the host of the Levite offering his daughter and the Levite's concubine to be abused for the same reason (Judges 19). Hospitality that ignores the needs of those within, to focus on those without, can be counterproductive. We need to simultaneously nurture and protect our own families and cultures while we engage in showing hospitality to others. The two cannot be separated.

The question of boundaries relates to this. How do we show hospitality to others, while still maintaining our own identity? To share our "place" with others implies that we must first have something to share—we must know our own identity. As Pohl states, "strangers desire welcome into places that contain a rich life of meaning and relationships" (1999:136). In this sense, there must be a practice of both inclusion and separation. We must bring others in, while still knowing who we are.

However, we cannot fully know ourselves outside of others.[121] Volf sees the development of identity as a process of "differentiation" where there is both "separating and binding" (1996:65). Identity, therefore, includes "connection, difference and heterogeneity" (ibid. 66). We find ourselves both in distinction from and in relation to others. "Identity is the result of both distinction from the other *and* the internalization of the relationship to the other" (ibid.).

Laws concerning care for aliens in the Old Testament were closely connected to themes of covenantal love and holiness (see Rhodes comments on Leviticus 19, 1998:131-133). However, foreign elements that might disrupt or threaten Israel's identity were excluded (Deuteronomy 18:9-16).[122] In the same way, the church is called to be a distinct community but also to welcome strangers (Meeks 1983:84-107). When the welcome of a stranger jeopardized a new, young community through, for instance false teaching, then the welcome was to be removed (2 John 9-11). Boundaries therefore benefit our practice of holiness and identity, as long as they do not foster exclusion.

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121 Paul Ricoeur argues in *Oneself as Another* that "the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such a degree that it cannot be thought of without the other" (1992:3).

122 There appears to be a distinction between the use of Hebrew words in relation to the stranger. For instance, the common word for stranger, *ger*, we noted earlier referred a sojourner or resident alien. The *ger* was to welcomed but was also expected to live by the covenantal commitments of membership in the household of Israel. The word later came to mean a proselyte in the intertestament period. The words *nokari/nekar* and *zar* tend to refer to a foreigner who still has another home. These foreigners were less committed to Israel's God and therefore were treated more cautiously. The book of Proverbs warns against strangers several times (6:1; 7:5; 11:15; 14:10; 20:16; 27:2, 13) but each time uses the words that imply a deceitful or abusive foreigner.

> Boundaries or guidelines protect guests, maintain communal identity and commitments, and preserve workers. They are necessary in defining who we are, and in providing the kind of ordering necessary to life. While we value the uniqueness and importance of every person, we should also be able to acknowledge differences (Pohl 1999:139).

The nature of setting boundaries can be informed by a helpful concept from Paul Hiebert. Using the mathematical concept of a set, he speaks of three kinds of sets that shape our communal identities. The first is a "bounded set" which has an either/or category—something is either an apple or it is not. The second is a "fuzzy" set where the point of inclusion or exclusion is difficult to define, as when a mountain merges into a plain. The last set is a "centered set" in which the set is defined by a centre and the relationship of things to that centre. Hiebert suggests that the category of "Christian" should be defined as a "centered set." The focus is not on "maintaining the boundary," but on "reaffirming the center" (1985:424).

The setting of boundaries will be less concerned with establishing the differences between ourselves and others, and more concerned with affirming our core identity in Christ. Adventist theologians in the 1980s struggled with just such a concept as they tried to relate to diversity. They finally adopted a "unity-in-diversity" model that showed Christ as the centre and a movement toward Christ as a movement toward each other (Caleb Rosado, "United in Christ" *Adventist Review*, June 22, 1995:8-12). This perspective sees diversity as permissible and valued, but not as the centre of our faith.

11.8.5 Conclusion

Thus, while the practice of hospitality is faced with several challenges and barriers, it remains a powerful and compelling narrative that has both practical and theological richness for congregations in a multicultural society. Strategies can be developed for overcoming the fear of the stranger, for respecting the other and for setting boundaries. By centring ourselves in the self-giving love of the cross, we can reach out to others and embrace them, while still maintaining our own identities.

11.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have outlined the practice of hospitality for the local congregation by exploring it metaphorically, conceptually and practically. We have seen that hospitality to the stranger requires several movements: (a) the invitation or welcome; (b) providing the gift; (c) feasting at the table; (d) sharing stories; (e) providing a room, and; (f) becoming part of the household. Each of these movements describes the process of growing intimacy that overcomes our strangeness without making destroying our differences or our identity.

As we looked at these movements we looked at the practical implications of each movement and while recognizing the individual contexts of each congregation, we saw the rich possibilities of this narrative for the local congregation.

However, the narrative of the stranger and the practice of hospitality face several challenges, including how to overcome the fear of the stranger, respect them in their otherness and also work within boundaries. Tensions exist in the practice of hospitality to the stranger: risk comes up against opportunity; identity is balanced against otherness; and boundaries are worked out in a context of sacrifice. Nevertheless, in spite of these paradoxical tensions, we see in this narrative the potential for bringing diverse communities together based on an ethic of self-giving and mutual acceptance.

CHAPTER TWELVE: *PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS*

12.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will analyse this research project from a retrospective point of view, assessing whether the intended outputs were achieved and discussing the possible value of the results.

Like any research project, the end is only the beginning. It is hoped that insights gained from the dialectical relationship between the congregational study (along with its sociological analysis) and the theological response will be helpful for congregations undergoing transition. We will assess possible applications of this material and its importance for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa.

We will also deal with possible objections to the conclusions raised, limits on the current research project and areas for further study. Since the goal of this research was exploratory rather than exhaustive, it is hoped that further study will enable some of the hypotheses and models generated by this research project to be tested.

Lastly, the tendency to depend on humanistic methods in this project is discussed and we end with a call to greater faithfulness to God's divine intention for diversity. Ultimately, hospitality to the stranger is accomplished not by our mediocre attempts but by God's own activity and generosity.

12.1 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

At the beginning of this research project, three aims were identified that actuated the development of this study. These aims were:

1. To uncover the social factors involved in the transformation process between a homogeneous and heterogeneous faith community in such a way as to understand the narrative structures (stories) guiding this process within specific contexts and congregations.
2. To formulate and analyse theological responses to this transitional process based on the normative traditions of the Christian faith.
3. To allow the faith communities to be involved in this project in such a way that it enables both critical realism of hypotheses as well as constructive theology-in-context leading to a fuller realisation of the event of the Word of God

We will discuss each of these goals and their realization in this project. Any analysis of aims inevitably also involves a discussion of research methods and we will critically examine some of the guiding methodology and its effectiveness in this research project.

12.1.1 *Uncovering Social Factors in Congregations in Transition to Heterogeneity*

The methodology in this section was predominantly drawn from the *Handbook for Congregational Studies* by Carroll et al. (1990) and *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* by Ammerman et al. (1998). After consideration it was decided to keep the overall structure of the previous handbook (examining context, identity, process and program) because of its value within the specific context of congregations in transition. However, elements of the revised handbook were used as part of the analysis.

Several methods were used for the congregational analysis in the research project. On a broad scale, the attempt was made to gain input from the wider congregation. This was done through a personalized congregational questionnaire which included both demographic elements and a section for attitudinal response. This was administered during the worship services and had a high response rate (approximately seventy to ninety percent of all adults attending returned a survey). The survey was structured so that it would take no more than twenty minutes and time was allotted by the minister during the service for the survey to be completed. As a result, most of the surveys were returned completed, except for some of the older members at Umbilo and Brooklyn who struggled to complete the entire survey in the time allotted.

The surveys proved a helpful tool for assessing general congregational attitudes and evaluating personal responses against this broader congregational response. It was also helpful in finding out the perspectives of visitors who were attending the congregation, especially at Umbilo and Sandton, where large numbers of visitors are present on any particular Sabbath. The surveys also helped to give comprehensive "snapshots" of the congregational profile. Finally, the surveys were used as a discussion point in presentations to the church boards whose members were anxious to see this kind of "objective" feedback. The surveys thus appeared to achieve their objective in gaining both a profile of the congregation as well uncovering general attitudes among attendants.

However, there were at least two problems with the surveys. Firstly, one of the attitudinal response items included the word "and" in it which implied two separate statements in one item for congregants to evaluate and agree with. This could have been overcome by having a professional sociologist examine the questionnaire before it was administered. There would probably have been other improvements to the questionnaire had this been done. The second problem involved choosing which questions to place on the survey. Ideas for the survey were tested in a sample survey done at Highlands Seventh-day Adventist Church in Harare and a second survey done at Helderberg College Church in Somerset West. Input was also gained from George Yancey who graciously provided copies of a national telephone interview that his team conducted in the United States. However, in retrospect, some of the questions/statements used were unnecessary and could have been replaced by more insight-gaining ones.

One possible way to have refined the questionnaire would have been to administer two of them in each congregation, one at the beginning of the study and one after initial analysis and feedback had been given. This would have enabled a reworking of the initial survey to gain information pertinent to that particular congregation and its needs. The second survey could also have been used to test potential hypotheses about underlying narratives in the congregation.

Another form of congregational analysis involved semi-structured interviews. In each congregation twenty to forty interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted not only among members, but also among visitors and previous or non-attending members. Persons for these interviews were selected by asking the pastors for a representative list of people from across racial, cultural, gender and class groupings. In the process, most members of the boards were interviewed. As a result, there may have been a skewing in the analysis that reflected leadership issues more than general issues in the congregation. Hopewell's form of narrative analysis was not found as useful in this analysis as dealing more directly with congregational issues.[123]

In the interviews, I did not attempt to try to try to follow the four-fold process of the handbook too closely (see Venter's difficulties with this approach 1993:277) but rather to let the stories and narratives unfold naturally as people described both their own journeys and their perspectives on how the congregation had changed as it moved to becoming more racially inclusive. Instead of asking the same questions in each interview, over fifty questions were drawn up ahead of time and these were used as a "bank" to draw from during the interviews. New questions were also added as issues and processes in the congregation became apparent. As a result, some of the "structure" of the interviews may have been compromised, but it is believed that the end results were more insightful.

Bulletins and other printed material did not prove as valuable as hoped. The churches in all three congregations had not kept copies of old bulletins making historical researching of these documents impossible. Current bulletins highlighted programming and the order of service but contained very little information that appeared to be symbolic of the congregation's narrative. All three churches used standard denominational educational and Bible study materials. As a result, bulletins could only be assessed for program and participant information and bulletin collection was limited to the time spent in direct contact with each congregation.

[123] Hopewell asks questions that relate to personal crises in understanding the narrative forms that shape the congregation. This approach was initially used, but in the end was too time-consuming because it tended to side-track people into dealing previous emotional pain. In Hopewell's approach, the researcher often ends up playing the role of the counselor. It was found to be more valuable to ask people to relate their personal spiritual journeys and then to indicate how they felt race and cultural change were impacting on the congregation and their own journeys.

The local political context did not receive much attention in this project. This is partly because Adventist congregations tend to be apolitical and therefore somewhat uninvolved in their local political contexts. Since both Umbilo and Sandton had commuting congregations, the influence of the surrounding neighborhood was less significant. Denominational history received particular emphasis because it was felt that this was one of the most significant contextual influences on the congregation. However, the impact of broader contextual forces in the areas surrounding the churches (such as the campus at Umbilo) may have been helpful in setting that congregation within its context.

The three congregations proved fruitful in different ways. Sandton showed some of the dynamics of cultural conflict and leadership tensions especially between South Africans of different colours. Umbilo was an example of a well-established church undergoing racial transition with the influx of immigrants and students being the primary impetus for change. Brooklyn was valuable for its stories of both positive and negative racial incidents that had informed the lives of those attending.

I believe that the overall research goal was achieved, because a number of significant social factors were uncovered. This was partly also due to being able to do greater sociological analysis based on the commonality between the congregation's contexts. Identifying fears and hopes in different races, as well as differing perspectives on the futures of the congregations are all indications of the value of this research project. I was also able to describe multiple identities at work and the need for a common vision, which was significant in understanding these kinds of congregations.

12.1.2 *Formulating a Theological Response to Transitional Processes*

The challenge of formulating a theological response was immense. The breadth of the questions raised from congregational praxis dealt with a large variety of issues from interracial dating, to developing a "biblical" worship culture, to racism, to evangelism. It soon became apparent that one would either have to superficially answer all these questions, or else engage them in a broader way. Rather than trying to define a "one size fits all" model, I therefore looked for a narrative that would serve as a fund for practical theological thinking in the local congregation. I first tried to think through the existing theological narratives in the congregation (with regard to racial transition) and eventually concluded that although there was a great variety, they essentially focused around two poles: difference and unity.

My first attempt at developing a narrative therefore looked at the unity-in-diversity model previously developed by Adventist theologians (and many others) in attempts to grapple with cultural diversity in the local congregation. However, I ultimately discarded this approach because it proved too ambiguous to be a compelling narrative. Miroslav Volf's work on *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996) and Charles Foster's

Embracing Diversity (1996) helped me to see the narrative of the stranger as a rich narrative that had possibilities for the heterogeneous congregation. Showing hospitality to the stranger was further informed by a variety of recent works on this notion by authors such as Parker Palmer (1985), Christine Pohl (1999) and John Koenig (2001).

However, recognizing the limitations of any narrative, I added significant sections to my theological response that dealt with a number of challenges that the narrative of the stranger raised but did not fully answer. I therefore spent time discussing identity and otherness, reconciliation, the *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God in relation to South Africa. I believe that this extended discussion helped to fine tune some of the vaguer answers of a pure narrative approach.

The work on this subject was particularly rewarding, for the narrative seemed to appeal to lay theological thought and generated both interest and debate. The narrative also extended the discussion beyond racial issues to social issues involved in caring for the needy stranger. While the narrative is not all encompassing (as no human narrative ever can be) in many ways it paralleled the movement and intention of God toward others as indicated in the Scriptural record. The narrative therefore has the potential of effectively critiquing the status quo ideology of the narrative of difference without falling into the sometimes naïve idealism of the narrative of unity.

Of course, the implications of this narrative for the local congregation are just beginning, but I believe it has potential to set both the direction and mission of local congregations who are undergoing transition to heterogeneity.

In this narrative, I did not attempt to resolve the tension between unity and diversity. The concept of "many rooms" in one house resonated with some whites but was opposed by some of the blacks. They felt that it was leading back to apartheid. They were not sure how thick the walls between the rooms would be! The difficulty of dealing with diversity and with the feeling of being "taken for a ride" when I was suggesting that hospitality demanded a gift and a welcome was not appreciated by all whites. I believe that these tensions are part of the healthy growth that comes from attempting to live out God's kingdom in both sign and sacrament.

12.1.3 Congregational Involvement

This final goal allowed for a theology that was more interactive in nature and involved time spent in strategic planning and mission analysis in each congregation. A combination of traditional strategic planning using the SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) as well as the

dialectic approach of Groome (Story and Vision critiquing current practice) were used. These interactive sessions were done with the church board and provided helpful insights into not only leadership processes but also the very real struggle of congregations attempting to fulfil God's mission in a changing society.

The benefit of the board meetings and the strategic visioning that resulted needs to be explored more fully as a research method. In retrospect, this was one of the less developed aspects of this methodology. Helpful feedback for this project was also given when ideas were presented bringing clarity to the theological process. Email responses from members provided insights into alternative views from the ones that I had thought of (as for instance when insights from black members critiqued some of my ethnocentric perspectives). I believe that more time in the research project could have been invested in community dialogue. Some of this was limited by my relocation to the United States at the end of the congregational analysis. This resulted in my research role after the initial study being limited to emails and occasional visits and interviews with congregational members. I continue to remain in an active consulting role with each congregation.

The narrative of the stranger was presented by me as a sermon to each congregation. This had the benefit of it providing general direction to the whole congregation and there appears to have been a positive and appreciative response. However, applying the insights from the model of welcoming the stranger are still to be effectively implemented in the congregation. As I indicated at the beginning of the research project, the final area of ongoing dialogue between the research idea and the community lies beyond the scope of this study. However, I plan to keep in touch with these communities as they seek to more faithfully live out the *missio Dei* in their local context.

In this theological response it is important to note that I did not attempt to answer directly the question of the ethical desirability of racially mixed congregations as others have done (Venter 1993; DeYoung et al. 2003; Yancey 2003; Anderson 2004; etc.) Instead, I focused on providing a narrative that would give direction to congregations already undergoing unavoidable transition to heterogeneity. Neither was I attempting to prove that these congregations would remain multicultural in the long term (this may be unlikely). However, in examining the theological narrative of welcoming the stranger, I did become convinced that the inclusion of the other was fundamental to both the health of society and the health of the church. In fact, it appeared to be the very mode of God's own being.

Thus, while not intending to examine the importance or the desirability of the racially-mixed church, I came to believe that it represents something closer to God's own mode of being than do homogeneous churches. This being said, however, I also concluded that inclusion means space for the other and not simply a "majority rules" approach. Unless there is an attempt to create space for white Adventists in the

new South Africa, the "becoming black" church is in danger of losing its mission to this particular grouping. My theological response left the question begging of how "reverse hospitality" and evangelism could take place so as not to lose the original white host in previously white churches.

12.2 VALUE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project was undertaken with the hopes of developing a realistic picture of the transitional processes taking place in Seventh-day Adventist churches in South Africa and in providing a theological direction for those congregations involved in racial and cultural change. Since undertaking this project, change has continued to impact on nearly every white congregation in South Africa, with more than 50 percent of previously white English-speaking Seventh-day Adventist congregations undergoing significant racial change. It is hoped that this story of Seventh-day Adventist churches will speak to other congregations and empower them to both understand and work through racial transition in a positive way.

Ways in which this research can be beneficial for local congregation include the following:

1. Awareness of psychological dimensions of change processes such as the "W-curve" for local congregations. This will enable members to stick through periods of hostility and hopelessness that inevitably comes with culture shock. The hope of feeling "at home" in the new congregation helps people deal with the difficulties of change.
2. Awareness of the sociological dimensions of change for the local congregation. This will enable congregations to better prepare themselves for each stage as well as deal with the inherent challenges present at each point in the journey of change.
3. Awareness of the challenges, difficulties and opportunities that other congregations have faced in dealing with racial change and some of the ways in which they have succeeded. The need to continue with evangelism and mission have been seen as clearly important, even in the midst of cultural and corporate change. We also noted the resources that congregations bring to cultural diversity. These stories can speak to other local situations even though the contexts might be quite different.
4. Reflection on the narrative of hospitality to the stranger and on the Christian pilgrimage of being a stranger. Churches can perform "audits" of their welcome to different racial groups, and consider ways in which they can more effectively reach out to their "neighbours." This research provides a theological fund from which to examine the nature of the multicultural congregation. Challenges of unity and diversity can be thought through from the perspective of the guest and the host and the interchangeability of those roles.

5. Practical suggestions in chapter eleven can be implemented by the local congregation. These suggestions were built on the model of showing hospitality to a stranger and should be taken not as mandates, but suggested guidelines for churches in transition.

12.3 LIMITATIONS AND ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

The nature and scope of this study has been necessarily limited by time, finance and other resources. This research project could therefore not engage in as much community life at the local congregation as hoped since the three congregations were spread across the geographical landscape of South Africa. Contact was kept by phone and email, allowing for limited but important interaction with each congregation.

As a result, it can be argued that the research project did not fully accomplish its goals, since the intended theology-in-context and community reflection was not fully acheived. This is partly true, since true congregational analysis requires a greater involvement in community life over an extended period. However, the number of interviews conducted across a broad representation of the congregation, as well as interaction with congregational leadership helped provide a corrective to this problem.

It could also be argued that the theological response did not answer all of the questions of praxis raised in the sociological analysis. This would, indeed, have been an impossible task. The intent, instead, was to provide a meaningful narrative for theological reflection. Some might argue that this narrative (of the stranger) is not directed enough at the problems of cultural diversity. It deals more with people who are vulnerable and needy. However, this argument does not consider the metaphorical value of the narrative in dealing with issues of diversity. In fact, the social dimension of the narrative works in its favour, helping to lead people beyond discussions of racial difference to issues of social justice.

Some have stated that multiracial congregations are so unique that degrees of commonality and models of development are not fully possible (see Foster and Brelsford 1996:xii). I argue, instead, that human commonality and similar cultural dynamics do make such comparisons possible. While there are unique aspects to any particular context, there are also common development stages that apply across different situations. Therefore I have allowed both an emic and etic approach.

Some would also argue that a white person cannot fully identify with nor study aspects of black (or coloured or Asian) culture. In response, I reply that my intention was not to study culture *per se* but to study cultural interaction and transition. This, of course, can be done by a person of any race. However, I had to be intentional in trying to listen carefully to voices from other cultures even as I struggled with my

own cultural baggage. Such is the nature of cultural studies. Indeed, our common humanness implies an ability to understand (albeit in a limited way) the perspectives and concerns of others.

12.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

The following areas of study that have been raised by this research project would need further analysis in future research:

1. An analysis of the "W Model" of cultural adaptation and its usefulness in helping church members deal with change.
2. Further researching into the stages of transition in a church moving toward heterogeneity. For this model to have authenticity, it would need to be tested across a greater number of churches undergoing transition. It could be that several models would need to be offered depending on the contexts in which transition began. Since the churches in this study shared similar types of transition and intentionality, I was unable to postulate more than one model of transition
3. A case study of a church undergoing transition and yet engaged in practical theological dialogue with the narrative of the stranger.
4. Analysis of the role of denominational influences on churches undergoing transition. In this research project, awareness of denominational forces was current in member's thinking, but not overtly so. How can denominational bodies provide resources for local congregations undergoing transition? This is a research question that was not addressed in this project but one that appears to be worth investigating.
5. This research project has raised the question of the demise of white Seventh-day Adventism and especially the loss of youth from previously white churches. Further research is needed on how to effectively evangelize minority groups in South Africa and how Adventism needs to maintain its relevance for young people.
6. Reconciliation is an important issue that has only been partly dealt with in this proposal. Further research is needed on how reconciliation can be more effectively dealt with on a practical level for congregations that are becoming heterogeneous in South Africa.
7. The application of this study of the local congregation can be broadened to other denominational entities such as administrative bodies, schools, hospitals, etc. Research is needed on how diversity impacts on these other kinds of institutions and whether the narrative of the stranger has bearing on their particular situations and to what extent.

12.5 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

I end this dissertation with a return to my discussion of practical theological methods. I realize that in the undertaking of congregational studies and theology done as critical correlational thinking, there can be a

significant limitation. One tends to rely on humanistic tools and methods to achieve the intended goal. This is the nature of science: to understand and to hypothesize. However, as the research project progressed, I became aware of the futility of trying to solve the problems of congregations in transition to heterogeneity using these methods. While I could more fully grasp the social dynamics involved and the practical challenges they were facing, this did not in itself help the congregations. They were looking for something deeper.

Even finely tuned theological narratives are inadequate for these congregations. Though they help to critique status quo thinking and move congregations beyond mere assimilationist models of diversity, even these narratives have no power in the congregation without the Spirit of God. Ultimately, practical theology is about God's mission in the world. It seeks to find ways to actualize that mission by bringing itself in humility before the Word of God and seeking God's face across the pages of history. Practical theology is a spiritual disciple. It is spiritual because it connects people with God. It is a discipline because it does not do this in a haphazard or spontaneous way.

In this research project I have aimed to tell two stories. One is the story of a local congregation seeking to bring in the reign of God in its local sphere. It is a story of challenge, hope and change. The other story is the story of God as he interacts with "the other" across the pages of history and in the contemporary congregation. And humbly, I have looked ahead to the merger of those two stories in the grand narrative of the consummation of the ages. To look into this story is a profoundly moving and mystical experience and one that cannot be fully captured in the pages of academic thought and dissertation writing.

I end this dissertation therefore with a prayer that the God who has shown Himself in the embrace of the prodigal son and in the cross of reconciliation will help us to find the embrace that will bring races together across our social and cultural divides. As God has shown hospitality to us, may we show hospitality to others and thus bring about God's reign of shalom.

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APPENDIX: DOCUMENT TO THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF CONFESSION

> *As Seventh-day Adventists we confess our faith in the Coming God (the One "who is and who was and who is to come" Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8) who as such calls for "the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus." (Rev 14:12; cf. 12:17; 13:10)*
>
> *In the face of the heresy of apartheid, we confess that we have failed by our sins of omission and commission to properly evidence the endurance of the saints, keep the commandments of God, or hold fast to the faith of Jesus, thereby misrepresenting the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ (Rev 14:6,7). This has been hurtful to our society, to the identity and mission of our corporate church, and to the lives of its individual members. Therefore, in deep repentance we seek for forgiveness from God and our fellow citizens, and commit ourselves to reformation, justice and reconciliation.*

As members of the church we are continually called upon to confess our faith in Christ. However, we recognize that we cannot confess faith in Christ without also concretely confessing our failures in reflecting the form of Christ in the world.

Since as Seventh-day Adventists we frequently use eschatological formulations like the one quoted above from Revelation 14:12 (cf. also 12:17; 13:10 & 19:10) as summary statements of the identity and mission of the church, it is appropriate that we put these "identifying marks" of the church to the test in regard to our own attitudes and actions during the apartheid era.

The Enduring Patience of the Saints

Just as the church in the time of the Roman Empire was called upon to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21; cf. both Rom 13 & Rev 13) so the church in our day is called to insightful discernment of the spirit of the times and to responsible action in light of the present but not yet consummated Kingdom of God. Both then and now this calls for the patient endurance of suffering for the cause of Christ. We confess that we were altogether too caught up with maintaining our traditional a-political stance with regard to the separation of church and state to effectively combat the viciousness of apartheid. Under the pressure of the times we allowed the structures of the church to gradually become patterned along the lines of apartheid, by providing separate church regional organizations for different racial groups within the church. We failed to realize that the state demanded of its citizens things to which it had no claim and that, as Christians, we should have resisted this usurpation of God's authority to the uttermost.

All this happened *despite* the fact that officially the church claimed to be opposed to racial discrimination, and that at the highest levels it remained organisationally one body. This demonstrates how easy it is for us to basically conform to the pattern of the world in spite of our intentions to do otherwise. In attempting, rightly, to stay out of party politics we ended up getting involved more than we knew in the national politics of the status quo. Without any means of properly critiquing what we were doing because of our socio-political ignorance, we tragically misread the "signs of the times". This must not happen again.

Although it is true that as a church body we never officially ascribed to the ideology and doctrines of apartheid, we now recognise that we failed to fully acknowledge that apartheid, in any of its forms, flies in the face of the gospel of "God with us" and must therefore be reckoned a heresy. As a church we failed

to truly *be* the *church* (the "called-out ones") by both our tendency to avoid the suffering that accompanies true discipleship, and our silence in the face of the suffering of others.

Keeping the Commandments of God

Seventh-day Adventists believe that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. But such grace is not cheap, and it leads to a life of loving obedience to God. We confess that despite our zeal for the commandments of God we failed to adequately contextualize just what the righteousness of God meant in practice in South Africa. Can we honestly say that we obeyed the injunction to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27)?:

- Did we not all too often put the god of expediency before the Lord God the righteous judge (Exodus 20:2-3; Deut 5:6-7)?
- Can we be sure that we did not make for ourselves "an idol" (Exodus 20:4; Deut 5:8) of this or that doctrinal tenant or our own self-interest as a minority religious community at the expense of the poor, oppressed and needy of our land (Isaiah 58)?
- Did the proscription against "making wrongful use of the name of the Lord" (Exodus 20:7; Deut. 5:11) not compel us to resist those who would attempt to misuse that Holy name for an evil purpose?
- But, perhaps most poignantly of all, we have to ask how we could claim to properly keep the Sabbath holy without heeding its explicit demand for practical justice, co-humanity, deliverance and healing (Isaiah 1:10-18; 56:1-7; 58; Matt 11:28-12:8)? Do we not have to explicitly confess that precisely as *Seventh-day* Adventists we should have done more to exemplify the meaning of the biblical Sabbath both within our own community and in our external dealings with society? Furthermore, in the light of the biblical extension of the humanitarian implications of the Sabbath to the jubilee year, should we not have realized that we are not at liberty to treat the land itself as an inalienable possession, but rather as a trust for responsible stewardship (Lev 25)? For surely true Sabbath-keeping and keeping silence in the face of oppression are mutually exclusive (Exodus 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15).

Respect for family, life, marriage, property, truth and limits make up the second table of the law of God (Exodus 20:12-17; Deut. 5:16-21). Once again we have to ask whether we did enough to honour the law, and uphold the righteousness of God in the face of the rampant lawlessness and disregard for every one of these principles in our country:

- How could we not see that the Group Areas Act and Pass Laws attacked the very fabric of family life, destroying parental and marital relationships?
- Should we not have recognized in the institutionalization of systemic violence, and the brutalization of the innocent, a direct transgression of the commandment not to kill?
- How could we not have appealed to the prohibition against stealing in the face of forced removals, expropriation of land, and the exploitation of labour?
- Surely the command not to bear false witness demanded that the church speak out against the lies, deceit and distortion that became endemic in our society? For Jesus said "you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).
- Do we not have to admit that we coveted security, peace and quiet for ourselves, with public respect and acceptance, rather than risk raising the wrath of a state running amuck with the exploitation of the poor, and the enrichment and corruption of the strong?

We now recognize that to restrict our attention merely to the so-called "spiritual realm" belies the physical, social and very practical intent of the commandments. We resolve to be more biblical in relation to the balance between the spiritual and the social in the future.

In the light of all this, we cast ourselves on the mercy of God and appeal to the grace of Jesus Christ for forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration.

Holding Fast to the Faith of Jesus

At the heart of our faith is the reconciliation accomplished in the person and by the work of Jesus Christ. We, together with all Christians, confess that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female;" for all of us are "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28; cf. Eph 1-3; John 17). As adopted children of God, unity with God and each other is not an optional extra it is what salvation means. As our official statement of fundamental beliefs declares:

> The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. Fundamental Belief #13 [SDA Church Manual, 1980]

We have to confess that, in appearance and reality, our practice in South Africa gave lie to the very intent of this tenant of our own fundamental beliefs. We were out of step with the stated principles of our worldwide church.

In Revelation 12:17 the saints are identified as "those who keep the commandments of God and *hold the testimony of Jesus.*" According to Revelation 19:10 "the testimony of Jesus is the *spirit of prophecy.*" For a church that has made much of the "Spirit of Prophecy" as an important spiritual gift within the body of Christ, we have to confess that we have been singularly at fault in failing to address the tragic distortion of human rights, and the systemic misrepresentation of Christianity in our country *prophetically.* The prophetic task of the church demands that we not hesitate to "speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute," to "speak out, judge righteously, [and] defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8,9). For one cannot separate the evangelistic imperative to proclaim the testimony of Jesus, from the critical task inherent in the spirit of prophecy. The church needs to proclaim both the good news of God's saving "Yes" contained in the gospel of Christ *and* the prophetic warning of God's righteous "No" which will be uttered finally and decisively on the day of judgment. But the prophetic No must always be articulated and understood for the sake of the gospel Yes - the good news of God's lavish, astonishing and reconciling grace!

We commit ourselves, therefore, once again and all the more earnestly to the proclamation of the "eternal gospel" of the universality of God's love; the denouncement of the "Babylonian captivity" of the church in which it sells its soul to the state; and the articulation of a more effective and clear warning against the worship of the "beast" that civil-religious concoction of blasphemy, coercion, human arrogance and injustice that seems to find root all too easily in our midst (Rev. 14:6-11).

In Answer to the Questions of the TRC, we reply:

1. To what extent has your denomination/community suffered from apartheid in the past?

Apartheid hurt *both* oppressed and oppressors, albeit in different ways. As a denomination we have been affected by both forms of hurt. However, the vast majority of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist church in South Africa, by virtue of the simple fact that they belonged to disadvantaged communities, were victims of a governmental system that rode roughshod over normal human rights in many areas of

everyday living. Legislation enacted during these years has been well documented. Laws were fashioned to govern practically every aspect of life from the cradle to the grave. The effects of these societal manipulations impacted on all sectors of our membership. We list a few of them, but by so doing we do not and indeed cannot quantify the human emotion, pain and sorrow involved.

A. Group Areas Act

Hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist families were forced to leave their homes. The overall impact of such actions on the lives of those involved might never be fully calculated. However, the cascading effect on society was devastating. Congregations were forced to sell their churches to the Community Boards set up by the state. No profit was allowed. Therefore new church buildings could not be afforded and the world Seventh-day Adventist Church was called upon to subsidize the funding of replacement church buildings. This process by itself took many years and during the interim period members were forced to worship in classrooms and inadequate community halls. Demographics led to increasing segregation in local churches. Nokuphila hospital in Alexandria township was forced to close. Schools were closed or relocated. A widening gulf separated the "haves" and the "have nots". Unequal distribution of resources, unequal pay, and unequal opportunities hammered home the hard reality of injustice. Even before the apartheid era, black church members had experienced the stereotypes, cultural biases, paternalism and patterns of discrimination so characteristic of the colonial period. Now they had to face its explicit and systematic extension and proliferation. A further unfortunate feature of this process was that scores and scores of our better educated and talented members left the country to settle in less threatening environments.

B. So-Called "Immorality Act"

Not a few church members were forced to leave the country in order to marry the one they loved, just because the draconian and unbiblical "immorality act" declared it an offense to marry or even to fraternize across the "colour line." Many others were forced to give up important friendships; families were split; and others had to endure dehumanizing racial classification and re-classification ordeals.

C. Job Reservation

Thousands of church members were adversely affected by discriminatory practices such as segregated amenities, restricted access to education, training and health care, and job reservation.

D. The Draft System And Compulsory National Service

The draft system of military conscription and later the compulsory national service system set up by the state to maintain the establishment, created much anguish amongst a sizable proportion of our membership. Young men struggled with conflicting calls to duty. Not only the traditional dilemmas of whether to take up arms or not, or whether to request special privileges for the purpose of Sabbath-keeping or some other activity considered by the system to be a minority religious practice but for many whether they could have *any* part in the "unjust war" being waged against their disenfranchised fellow citizens in apartheid South Africa. Some of those who did participate voluntarily or otherwise in the security apparatus of the times (particularly during the "total onslaught" period), were schooled in thought patterns that affected their ideas, ideology and value system. Several church members on both sides of the divide were physically and emotionally scarred by the terrible effects of war. Some lost life itself.

2. What have you done to struggle against apartheid or to support apartheid in the past?

We did not do enough to struggle against apartheid. Due to the intricate political system in force in South Africa, in which ideology was systematized and given Biblical and theological support, effects of the system rubbed off on the thinking of some, even among our church leadership. Many in the church imbibed, wittingly and unwittingly, the political philosophy in vogue at the time. This undoubtedly had an effect on the creation of structures which mirrored the political structures of the times. The church was divided into two Union Conferences with separate administrations, one to cater for the Blacks and the other for Indians, Coloureds and Whites. Indeed the two structures did not communicate with each other all that much except for certain essential times such as when formulating certain broad church policies. Secondary and tertiary educational institutions (such as Union College and Spion Kop College) which had served all races in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, soon became segregated along racial lines. Separate Welfare structures were created. To the degree that the church patterned itself after the thinking of the politicians, significant inequalities soon became apparent. The level of theological training, the preparation of teachers, the quality of educational standards at every level, salary structures, and pension provisions, all reflected the inequality of the structural arrangements and impacted on the level of service offered our members.

We are ashamed to admit that by and large the church acquiesced, through its silence and often times by its example inside and outside South Africa, to the injustice suffered by some and the injury done to our church community as a whole. The emotional and spiritual damage to our membership can only be estimated. Our sincere hope is that all persons in this fair land both within and without the ambiance of our influence will grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who understands our mortal frames and the frailties of our beings and offers compassion to all of his children. (Matthew 9:36)

However, this is not the total picture. There were also a significant number of those in the church at all levels that did what they could to resist the injustice and totalitarianism of apartheid. There were church administrators who opposed and spoke out against the creation of separate Unions in the 1950's. The church opposed the strong attempt in the 1960's to create a separate conference for Afrikaans speaking members because of the perception of an underlying political and racial motivation. After such a breakaway conference was formed, the church held its ground and eventually most of the members and ministers who had left recognized their mistake and returned to the church. During the 1970's the separate administrative structures for coloured and Indian members in the then Transvaal and OFS/Natal regions were disbanded and these members and churches merged with the "white" Transvaal and Oranje-Natal conferences. Individual ministers here and there spoke out more or less forcefully against the mirroring of apartheid within the church. From the 1980's on, we have academic papers, articles and books from both white and black Seventh-day Adventist's incisively critiquing the apartheid system. As already mentioned, a significant number of Adventist conscripts chose jail, community service or exile rather than serve to defend a system they believed to be unjust. Many SDA families and young people left the country because of their opposition to apartheid. Many thousands of white church members opposed the Nationalist government of the time. Thousands more, in their own personal contact with members of other races, demonstrated Christian care and charity.

Although it is hard to determine the figures, a significant number of Adventists, or those with an Adventist background or exposure to the church through Adventist schools, played an active part in the struggle itself. Special mention should be made of the role of the extensive network of church-run schools (from primary to tertiary level) which, regardless of their limited racial inclusiveness, provided a rare alternative to the ideology promoted in state-run schools. With a distinctive philosophy of education, Seventh-day Adventist schools followed a curriculum somewhat different to that of the public school system, and were able to maintain some degree of financial independence from the state. Together with the Catholic parochial school system, Adventist schools provided a real alternative to the "National Christian Education" of the government of the time. From 1990 on the church has been in the process of dismantling its discriminatory structures and policies. The world Seventh-day Adventist church set the direction with the "Perth Declaration" of 1990, followed by the merging of the two Unions in 1991. Seventh-day Adventist church members have also played important roles in the process of peace and

reconciliation, together with reconstruction and development, particularly in the build up to the 1994 elections and since.

Of course, looking back we have to acknowledge that none of this was particularly significant or sufficient. We could and should have done so much more. But it is both proper and important that we give recognition to those who had the insight, foresight and courage to swim against the stream during the stormy days that are now behind us.

3. What is your denomination's/community's commitment toward the future? How do you see yourself working for reconciliation? What expertise and experience are you able to bring to the process of reconciliation and nation building?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has now begun a process of unification. Following on from the merger of the two Unions in 1991, the church now has a fully representative conference structure in Kwazulu-Natal, and partially merged structures in the Free State, Northern, Eastern and Western Cape. While challenges still remain, we are committed to a complete removal of any vestige of racially motivated segregation at all levels.

Officially all our churches are open to full membership and participation rights. All educational institutions admit students without regard to race, salaries are being equalized irrespective of race and gender over a phase-in period. Our Community Service programme is working under a revised constitution approved by the Department of Welfare. This service is under constant review by our national body and our stated aim is to provide a more efficient service to the poorest of the poor.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As a church we commit ourselves in our proclamation and practice of the gospel in the context of South Africa:

- to endeavour to never again be silent in the face of injustice to any of our fellow citizens.
- to ensure that our structures, policies and personal lives evidence an acceptance of all persons (regardless of race, gender or any other such distinction) as neighbours with a right to be treated with full equality.
- to work toward the completion of the process of internal church unification by loving persuasion and by example. To urge that, where appropriate, sub-organizations and entities of the church follow the pattern set by Helderberg College in 1996 and consider making a direct statement of apology to those hurt in some way by specific actions or lack of them during the apartheid era. When we have hurt another it is our Christian responsibility to ask forgiveness and make matters right.
- to become re-incorporated into the normal world structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- to speak out on public issues effecting the broad society when moral, religious and other matters of conscience are at stake.
- to use our resources and expertise in the Welfare programme, Meals on Wheels Services and the Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA SA and International) to assist in the reconstruction and development of South Africa. We will encourage all our churches and members to become directly involved in demonstrating real compassion to people in need, and active in answering the needs of the community around them.
- to continue to serve the health-care needs of our citizens through our Adventist Health System, church-owned medical practises, and public health programmes.
- to continue to ensure that our educational institutions are multi-cultural and multi-racial environments where diversity is valued, and respect, tolerance and understanding promoted. Our tertiary institutions should play a leading role in the reconciliation and development process, by

graduating leaders in business, arts and sciences, and theology with the integrity, courage and wisdom to make a positive difference in the new South Africa. Through our educational system we will also continue to train health educators, teachers, child-care givers, and pre-primary teachers to serve in areas where help is needed most. Our long-standing commitment to a philosophy of service must be maintained and concretized in the life of every student.

- to extend our Literacy programme to help with the backlog that currently exists.
- to strive to better reflect the love of God for every one of His children so that the healing of mind, body and soul will continue in our beloved land, and the hope of the establishment of God's Kingdom might become a reality in our time.

As members of Christ's body, we can do no other than love unconditionally, care compassionately, and live prophetically in joyful expectation of the Coming God.